Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • Nov/Dec 2008 • $4.50

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The ART of DEVOTION

Powerful inspiration for spiritual practice is rooted in India's artistic and cultural traditions.

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Heaven's a great place, but it's not perfect.

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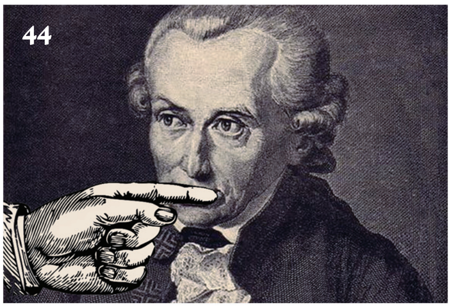
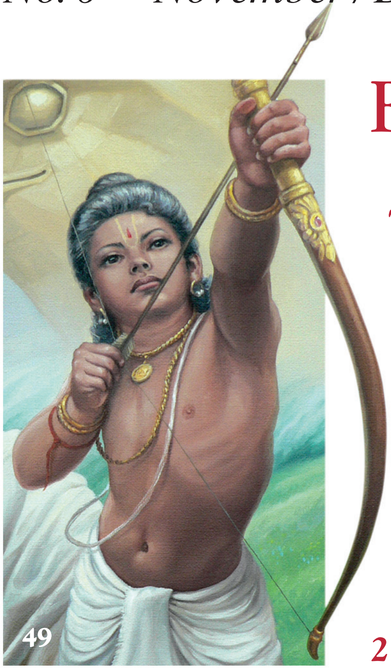
Back to Godh

Founded 1944 • Vol. 42, No. 6 • November / December 2008





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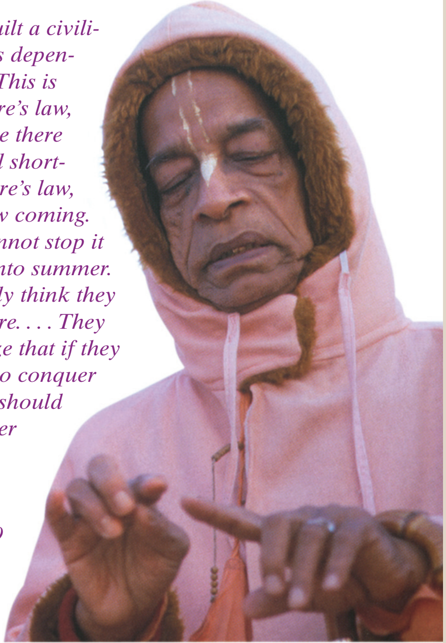
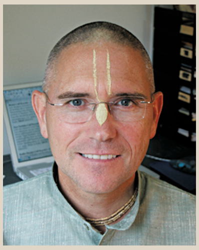
COVER To study dance, Indulekhā Devī Dāsī, from England, traveled to India, whose rich traditions of art, dance, and music inspire her in her spiritual practices. Please see the article beginning on page 16. (Photo by Ajay Chag.)



"We have built a civilization that is dependent on oil. This is against nature's law, and therefore there is now an oil shortage. By nature's law, winter is now coming. Scientists cannot stop it and turn it into summer. They wrongly think they control nature. . . . They do not realize that if they really want to conquer nature, they should try to conquer birth, death, old age, and disease."
—p. 29

WELCOME



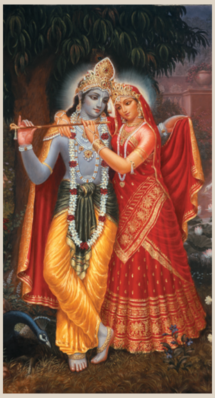
IN THIS ISSUE Indulekha Devī Dāsī writes about the spiritual depth of India's traditional art, dance, and music. Like much of India's heritage, these all have roots in the spiritual culture described in the Vedic literature. These venerable books tell us that all forms of art find their perfection in the glorification of God.

The arts are only one of many categories of human enterprise the Vedic scriptures deal with exhaustively. More and more, ideas from India's spiritual tradition are infiltrating the West. Unfortunately, important philosophical concepts, such as karma and dharma, often get blurred in translation. For example, the words karma and dharma are now part of the English lexicon, but they are often misused and ill defined. Authors Nārada Ṛṣi Dāsa and Satyarāja Dāsa draw from the Vedic scriptures to clarify the meanings of these words and their implications for our lives.

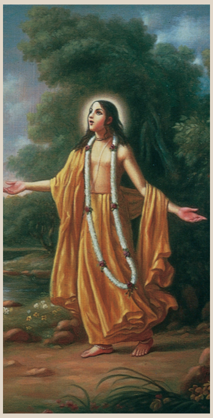
Similarly, Mukunda Mālā Dāsa writes about heaven, the goal of various religious traditions, but his insight gained from scriptural study inspires a troubling question: Is heaven worth the effort?

In "Taking Aim at the Supreme Target," Mohinī Rādhā Devī Dāsī directs us, as Lord Kṛṣṇa does, to a goal that surpasses heavenly happiness: pure love for God.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.—*Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor*



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are together the one Supreme Absolute Truth.



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa five hundred years ago.

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

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The Magazine of the
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Letters

Gratuitous Scientist Bashing

We are ever so thankful to our esteemed Vaiṣṇava devotees for sharing their spiritual experiences and thoughts with us through their contributions to *Back to Godhead* magazine. But may I suggest a little less of the gratuitous scientist bashing, please! There are a lot of us who work in different scientific and medical fields without losing sight of our ultimate destination—to be Kṛṣṇa conscious through developing our love for Him. As long as paper and printing presses are used for publishing Kṛṣṇa conscious thoughts, as long as devotees need to travel by road, rail, or air, as long as we need to have our medical needs taken care of, as long as computers and the Internet are needed to have our websites, we should give the scientists their due respect. They are just using their talents to make our material lives livable. Not all of them are godless creatures trying to replace God.

As much as it displeases me to give specifics, the write-up titled, "A Call to Spiritual Heroism," by Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa, in the Sep/Oct 2008 issue is an example of this infraction. We don't need to berate scientists at every opportunity to spread our message. A little sensitivity would go a long way toward keeping things civil. It is considered highly sinful to offend a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Why is it okay to do so when the devotee is a working scientist and not a full-time devotee living in a temple?

Ramesh Kalra
Huntington Beach, California

Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa replies: I share your respect for all people—including scientists—as they are all children of Kṛṣṇa. But you state that scientists are just earning a living. Unfortunately, many explicitly claim to be discovering the truth about the world. And their truth-claims have misled people away from God by atheistic theories like evolution and the big bang, both of which, despite being unproven, are portrayed in textbooks and media as scientific truth, thus making faith in God as the designer appear unscientific and foolish.

Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy can certainly stand on its own right without comparison with anything else, science included, but many people will not give it due consideration, being misled by scientism. That's why Śrīla Prabhupāda put considerable emphasis on disproving atheistic science, and we are simply following in his footsteps.

Regarding devotees using technology while berating scientists who make the technology, it is like the strategy of using a thorn to remove a thorn. As the latest technology is used to promote scientism, to effectively counter it we use the same technology to spread the truth. For more on this, please see my article "Where Technology Falls Short" (BTG, March/April 2006).

To summarize, as devotees of God we have nothing against science or scientists, but because science is being misused, misinterpreted, and misrepresented to propagate atheism, we point out the deficiencies in the truth-claims of science.

Oil Extraction

I would like to express my admiration for the article "Water: A Meditation," written by Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī [July/August]. It was especially nice how the author was able to build an illuminating and inspirational article simply from the act of bathing in the ocean while she was on a visit to Hawaii.

Just as the Ganges flows from the spiritual world to the material planets, bringing with it opportunities to become purified and remember Kṛṣṇa, so this article in its flowing manner was an opportunity to remember Kṛṣṇa in a clever and refreshing manner.

Ūrmilā writes, "The Earth planet once fell into the universal water when demoniac persons disturbed her orbit by drilling for oil and upsetting her balance." I was initially skeptical about this statement, but I found this quote from Śrīla Prabhupāda in the purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.7.1: "The floating of the planets in the weightless air is due to the inner constitution of the globes, and the modernized drilling of the globe to exploit oil from within is a sort of disturbance by the modern demons and can result in a greatly harmful reaction to the floating condition of the Earth." Śrīla Prabhupāda goes on to say, "A similar disturbance was created formerly by the demons headed by Hiraṇyākṣa (the great exploiter of the gold rush), and the Earth was detached from its weightless condition and fell down into the Garbhodaka Ocean."

So Ūrmilā was spot on in what she said, and it certainly made me more aware of the demoniac and dangerous practice of oil production in today's society, and its overdependence on oil. Perhaps we should be doing more as devotees to minimize our use of oil and oil products.

Thank you again for a stimulating and well-wrought article.

Kṛpākara Dāsa
Adelaide, Australia

Taking the Life of Plants

When I requested my friends to adopt vegetarianism, they replied that vegetarians kill plants and eat them, so why not kill animals?

Vidya Neelakanta
Via the Internet

Our reply: It is true that plants have life, and that means that to kill and eat them for sense gratification is sinful. Fortunately, Kṛṣṇa's devotees incur no sinful reaction for their vegetarian diet because they are following the directions of the Supreme Lord. In Bhagavad-gītā (9.26) Kṛṣṇa says, "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it." So devotees, by making the act of eating a sacrifice for the satisfaction of the Supreme, are protected from any sinful reaction.

The objective of devotional life is pleasing the Supreme Lord by following His directions, not in vegetarianism or any other "ism" related to material life.

Can We Make Mistakes?

If one makes even one mistake, does that mean that he or she cannot be Kṛṣṇa conscious or become perfect? It is all right to make mistakes and correct them? What are the consequences of our mistakes?

Henry Chau
Via the Internet

Our reply: The objective of devotional service is to perfect our existence through practice, and "practice makes perfect." Kṛṣṇa's material energy conditions us to think that we are the supreme enjoyer, so naturally it will take some time to rectify our polluted consciousness. As long as we are sincere and determined to progress in spiritual life and work toward that objective, we will gradually come to the perfect stage of pure, unalloyed devotional service. The *anarthas* (bad habits) will decrease and eventually cease all together as we continue with our regulated chanting and take shelter of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotees, always praying for their mercy.

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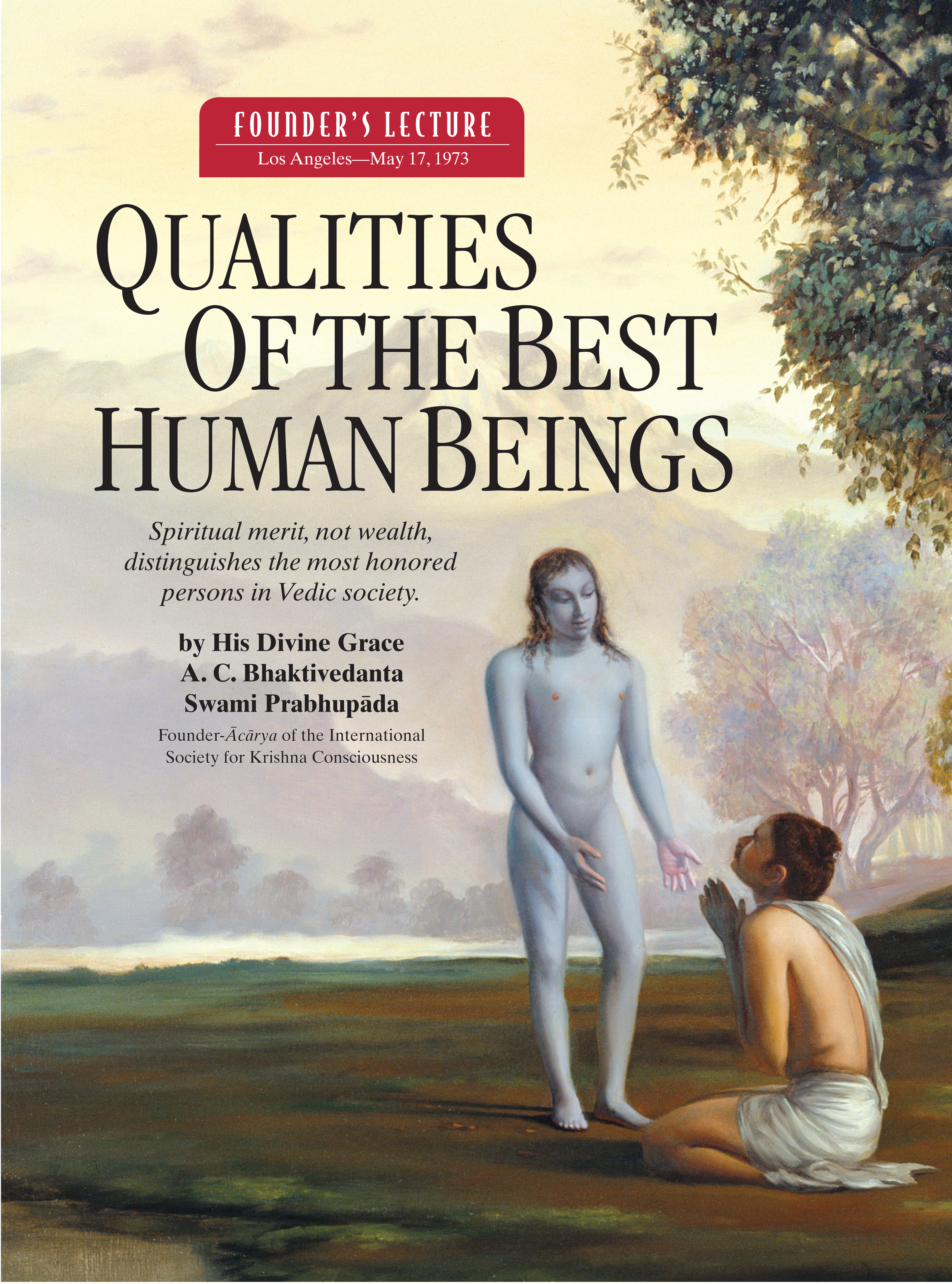


FOUNDER'S LECTURE

Los Angeles—May 17, 1973

QUALITIES OF THE BEST HUMAN BEINGS

Spiritual merit, not wealth, distinguishes the most honored persons in Vedic society.

by His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-*Ācārya* of the International
Society for Krishna Consciousness

bhagavān api viprarṣe
rathena sa-dhanañjayaḥ
sa tair vyarocata nṛpaḥ
kuvera iva guhyakaiḥ

"O sage amongst the *brāhmaṇas,* Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, also followed, seated on a chariot with Arjuna. Thus King Yudhiṣṭhira appeared very aristocratic, like Kuvera surrounded by his companions, the Guhyakas."—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.9.3

SŪTA GOSVĀMĪ is speaking to an assembly of learned *brāhmaṇas* at Naimisharanya. The meeting took place at least five thousand years ago. All those assembled were very learned scholars and *brāhmaṇas.* Therefore they are addressed as *viprarṣe—vipra* and *ṛṣi.* Not only were they *brāhmaṇas,* or *vipras,* but they were also *ṛṣis. Ṛṣi* means saintly person. Some were *rājarṣi—rāja,* or king, and *ṛṣi.*

Anyone, even from the ruling class, can become a saintly person, provided he lives like a saintly person. It doesn't matter whether one is a *brāhmaṇa* or a *kṣatriya. Kṣatriyas* are the rulers and soldiers. Generally *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas,* the first and second status of human society, can live as good at home as the saintly persons within the forest or the Himalayas.

Earlier in the *Bhāgavatam* these *brāhmaṇas* were addressed as *dvija-śreṣṭhāḥ,* "best of the *brāhmaṇas.*" A *brāhmaṇa* is already the best person, but if he becomes a saintly person, then his qualities become still more magnified.

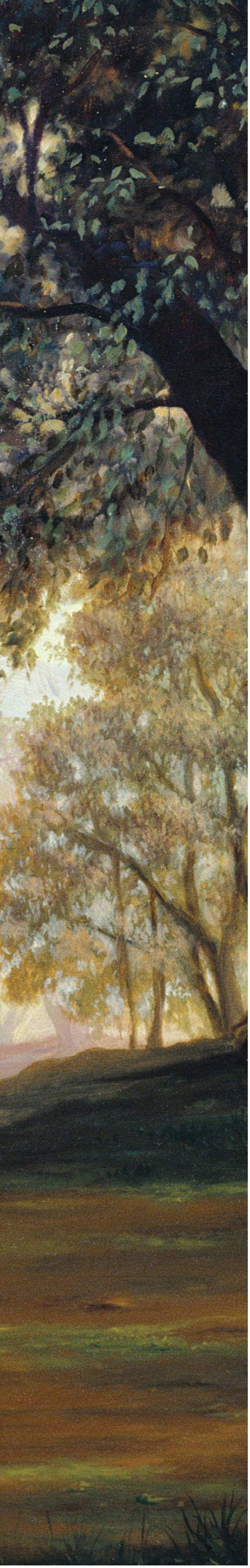
These *brāhmaṇas* were addressed, *ataḥ pumbhir dvija-śreṣṭhā varṇāśrama-vibhāgaśaḥ:* "You are all *brāhmaṇas,* the topmost of human society." In Vedic civilization there are divisions of human society: first-class men, second-class men, third-class men, and fourth-class men. Not only one class. No. Why? There must be divisions. That I have already explained.

The qualified *brāhmaṇas* are first-class men, the topmost class. The *kṣatriyas* are the second-class men. And the third-class men are the *vaiśyas,* the mercantile community. They simply think, "Where to get money?" They are third-class men, but at the present moment those who acquire money somehow or other are considered first-class men. It doesn't matter what their qualification is. If they have acquired some money some way or other, then they are considered first-class men.

This is a symptom of Kali-yuga, the current age of quarrel and hypocrisy. In Kali-yuga there is no honor for qualification. There is honor for money only. That's all.

It is stated in the *Bhāgavatam* that without money in Kali-yuga you cannot even get justice. In the court of justice, everyone is expected to get a proper judgment, but in Kali-yuga it is stated that even in the court of justice, you cannot get justice without money. That's a fact. If you have no money, then you cannot hire a good lawyer. And sometimes, in some countries, you have to bribe the judge. This is the position now.

In your country so many big, big men have been arrested for their dishonesty. Kali-yuga is so polluted that the minister is dishonest, the judge is dishonest, and what to speak of ordinary men. So you must get money some way or other. Then you can pass as a nice, polished gentleman. You keep yourself always polished, and within you may be full with all dirty things. But



Though world emperor, Mahārāja Parīkṣit accepted the humble position of student of the great sage and devotee Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who traveled the world naked, with no possessions.

Detail from a painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa if you have your pockets filled up with coins and notes, then you are nice.

Qualifications Required

Formerly it was not like that. One had to be qualified. *Varṇāśrama-vibhāgaśaḥ*—the Vedic system meant divisions according to qualification. There must be divisions. But people are very eager to make a classless society, without divisions. And that is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness society. We have no such divisions. *Divisions* means under the jurisdiction of the three modes of material nature. *Brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra*—these divisions are calculated when one is under the control of material nature. But if you become a devotee, material nature has no more control over you.

Kṛṣṇa is not attached to anyone, but His ability to satisfy everyone is His super-excellence.

That is the difference between a perfect Kṛṣṇa conscious person and a perfect mundane person. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person, a devotee, is no longer under the influence of the three modes of material nature. But ordinarily, everyone is under the control of the three modes.

Devotees are called *dvija-śreṣṭhāḥ,* the best of the *brāhmaṇas.* Even a *brāhmaṇa* is under the control of material nature. But the same *brāhmaṇa,* when he becomes a Vaiṣṇava, a devotee, becomes the best of the *brāhmaṇas.*

Bhagavān Defined

Here the word *rathena,* "on the chariot," is used. Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, being respectable personalities, were not walking in the procession but were riding on a chariot, as were the *brāhmaṇas* and others.

Kṛṣṇa is referred to here as Bhagavān, the Supreme Lord. The author could have used Kṛṣṇa's name. All others are mentioned by name. Yudhiṣṭhira's name is mentioned. Dhanañjaya, Arjuna's name, is mentioned. Others' names are mentioned. But when it comes to Kṛṣṇa, He is mentioned as Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Bhagavān—this word I have explained many times. *Bhaga* means opulence, fortune. From *bhaga* the word *bhāgya* has come. One who is very fortunate is called *bhāgyavān.* So *bhaga* means opulence, and *vān* means one who possesses. Kṛṣṇa possesses all the six main opulences: all strength, all beauty, all knowledge, all wealth, all fame, and all renunciation—everything complete.

Bhagavān means one who has the six opulences in full. So many rascals come as "incarnations" of God, Bhagavān, but you have to test whether they possess all the opulences in full. The first test is riches. Only if one has all the riches can he be Bhagavān. And nobody can say, "I have all the riches." I may have more riches than you, but I cannot say I have all the riches. So if you find somebody who possesses all the riches, all strength, all influence, all knowledge, all beauty—then He is Bhagavān. That is Kṛṣṇa.

There is no comparing Kṛṣṇa's opulences. I have several times given this example. In human society there is marriage. So Kṛṣṇa married 16,108 wives. And for each wife, He provided a marble palace bedecked with jewels. The furniture was made of ivory and gold, and the bedding and curtains were all made of silk. There were also beautiful gardens and flowering trees, including the celestial *pārijāta* flower. The *pārijāta* flower is not visible in this world, but Kṛṣṇa brought the *pārijāta* to earth from heaven.

When Kṛṣṇa and His wife Satyabhāmā went to the heavenly planet, she requested her husband, "Kṛṣṇa, I want this flower."

"All right."

So He gave her one flower.

Then He told her, "Why just one flower? I shall take the tree so that you'll get flowers daily."

When He was taking the tree, Indra came. Indra is the king of the heavenly planet.

"No, sir, you cannot do that," Indra told Kṛṣṇa. "You cannot take this tree to a lower planet. I cannot allow that."

And so Kṛṣṇa said, "No, My wife wants it. I must."

Kṛṣṇa's Excellence

That is Kṛṣṇa. He is complete. He even acts just like a henpecked husband to satisfy His wife in every respect. When He plays the part of a child before mother Yaśodā, He plays everything perfectly. He doesn't require any wife or mother. He is supreme. But when He plays the part of a husband, He plays it perfectly. His wife may think, "How much my husband is attached to me!" So she remains very much satisfied. Kṛṣṇa is not attached to anyone, but His ability to satisfy everyone is Kṛṣṇa's super-excellence. Although He had to satisfy 16,108 wives, every one of them was satisfied and was thinking, "Kṛṣṇa is much more attached to me than to His other wives." That is Kṛṣṇa's play.

Therefore Bhagavān is full, in every respect, in any field: fighting, opulence, household life, renounced life. If you study the life of Kṛṣṇa, you will find everything in full—beauty, knowledge, and so on.

Now, Kṛṣṇa gave us a little knowledge, which is known as *Bhagavad-gītā,* five thousand years ago, but it is still going on, all over the world. In our movement we sell our *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* everywhere and in large numbers, because it is full knowledge, not partial. Everything is complete. Can you show any book in the world that sells so widely and is so perfect? There is no such book.

Because we are Kṛṣṇa devotees we are eulogizing like that, but any scholar, any philosopher, any scientist will say like that: "Oh, there is no comparison to this book."

So that is the test of knowledge, Kṛṣṇa's knowledge. Therefore He is Bhagavān. Just try to understand Bhagavān. Bhagavān is not so cheap that any rascal can come and say, "I am Bhagavān. Worship me." And another rascal comes and says the same thing. Not like that. Don't take it cheaply. Bhagavān is not an ordinary thing. He must be complete in everything.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is mentioned here: *bhagavān api.* Why *api*? In Sanskrit composition each word has meaning. *Api* means "although." And here it implies, "Although He is Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, still He was going to see Bhīṣmadeva."

Bhīṣmadeva's Greatness

Just consider the position of Bhīṣmadeva. He was lying on his deathbed. The Pāṇḍavas were his grandsons, so it was their duty to be there. But why should Kṛṣṇa go there? Therefore it is said *bhagavān api:* "In spite of His being the Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead..." He was also going to show respect.

How great Bhīṣmadeva was you can just imagine. The list of great personalities who were present will be given—all the great sages and *brāhmaṇas.* Bhīṣma was such a great personality. He was not an ordinary man. Today, when a big person dies, all the selected persons of the city come to offer their homage. Bhīṣma was not dead, but he was going to die. He had received the blessing that he would not die until he desired, "Now let me die." Then he would die, otherwise not. So he was lying on the deathbed but was expecting to see Kṛṣṇa at the last stage. He was so great that even Kṛṣṇa was going to see him.

Now you can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Thank you very much.

Mayapur Institute Courses

The Mayapur Institute for Higher Education and Training,
Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir, Mayapur, West Bengal, India

Systematic Śāstric Study

(*Nov. 9, 2008–Feb. 11, 2009*)
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2009 Gaura Pūrṇimā Courses

Feb. 12–23—GBC meetings.
Feb. 15–20—*VTE Teacher Training Course 1,*
Atul Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, Vaṁśī Vadana Dāsa
Feb. 24—Gaura Pūrṇimā Fesival begins.
Feb. 25—Śrī Pañca Tattva Mahā-Abhiṣeka
(celebrating the fifth anniversary of their installation).
Feb. 24–27—*Varṇāśrama Mission: Make Vṛndāvana Villages,*
Bhakti Rāghava Swami, Bhakti Dhīra Dāmodara Swami,
Varṇāśrama Research Team.
Feb. 24–27—*Yoga Therapy Introduction: Being Fit*
to Serve Kṛṣṇa Better, Prāṇanātha Dāsa. Men only.
Feb. 24–27—*Deepening Vaiṣṇava Relationships: The Foundation*
for Kṛṣṇa's Mercy, Sukhavaha Devī Dāsī.
Feb. 24–Mar. 2—*VTE Teacher Training Course 2,* Atul Kṛṣṇa Dāsa.
Feb. 26–Mar. 3 —*VTE Leadership /Management,* Anuttama Dāsa.
Feb. 28–Mar. 6—*Yoga Therapy Practices: Being Fit*
to Serve Kṛṣṇa Better, Prāṇanātha Dāsa. (Men only.)
Mar. 7–10—*Ayurvedic Self-Healing,* Dr. Liladhar Gupta.
Mar. 7–10—*VTE Śāstric Study Teacher Training Course,* Atul Kṛṣṇa Dāsa.
Mar. 7–10—*Tools for Mending Broken Relationships,* Vrajalīlā Devī Dāsī.
Mar. 11—Gaura Pūrṇimā.

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*Vaishnava Training and Education
**This is a pilot version of the new VTE Bhakti-śāstrī Course,
developed by the Mayapur Institute's Curriculum Development Team.
†Before entering these course modules, students will complete a
Preliminary Home Self-Study Unit, available on CD at the MIHET
table or office, or on the MIHET website (http://www.mihet.org).

CALENDAR

*This calendar is calculated for Māyāpur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to **www.krishna.com/calendar**.*

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

October 15–November 13

(*Month of Dāmodara*)

November

2—Disappearance anniversary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Devotees observe this day with personal remembrances of Śrīla Prabhupāda, readings from his biography, and fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

6—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, a great follower of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

9—Utthānā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gaurakiśora Dāsa Bābājī, the spiritual master of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who was Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master. Fasting till noon.

13—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Rāsa-yātrā. Last day of Dāmodara-vrata and Cāturmāsya.

November 14–December 12

(*Month of Keśava*)

23—Utpannā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

December

9—Mokṣadā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans. Also, the anniversary of the day on which Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā.*

December 13–January 11

(*Month of Nārāyaṇa*)

16—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the spiritual master of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

23—Saphalā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

28—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa known for his Bengali devotional songs.

30—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

31—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, a Vaiṣṇava spiritual master and author who appeared in the seventeenth century. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā Devī, a consort of Lord Caitanya.

January

7—Putradā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

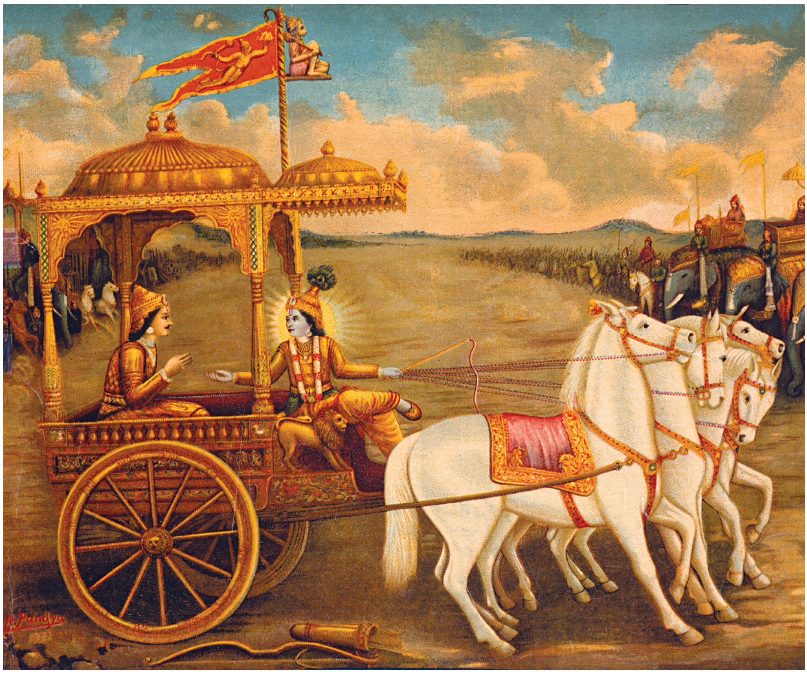
January 12–February 9

(*Month of Mādhava*)

15—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

16—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jayadeva Gosvāmī, a great spiritual master and author of *Gīta-govinda.*

21—Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.



Painting by V. H. Pandya

Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks the Bhagavad-gītā *to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukśetra.*

Glossary

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Ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

Balarāma—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.

Battle of Kurukshetra—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.

Bhagavad-gītā—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to His friend and disciple Arjuna.

Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.

Darśana—"viewing," audience with a deity or saintly person.

Dharma—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).

Godhead—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.

Gurukula—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").

Hare Kṛṣṇa—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

ISKCON—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Japa—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.

Kali-yuga—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.

Karma—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.

Kīrtana—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).

Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His original transcendental form (see "Godhead").

Mahābhārata—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.

Māyā—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.

Māyāvādī—one who regards the Abs ultimately impersonal.

Modes of nature—the three qualities (goo and ignorance) that hold sway over all action n the material world.

Nityānanda—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Prasādam—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to Him with devotion (literally "mercy").

Purāṇas—Vedic histories.

Rādhārāṇī—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.

Rathayātrā—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Puri, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").

Sannyāsa—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.

Śrī—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).

Śrīla Prabhupāda—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas,* which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.

Supersoul—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.

Upaniṣads—the 108 essential philosophical treatises that appear within the *Vedas.*

Vaiṣṇava—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).

Varṇāśrama—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).

Vedas—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord Himself at the beginning of creation.

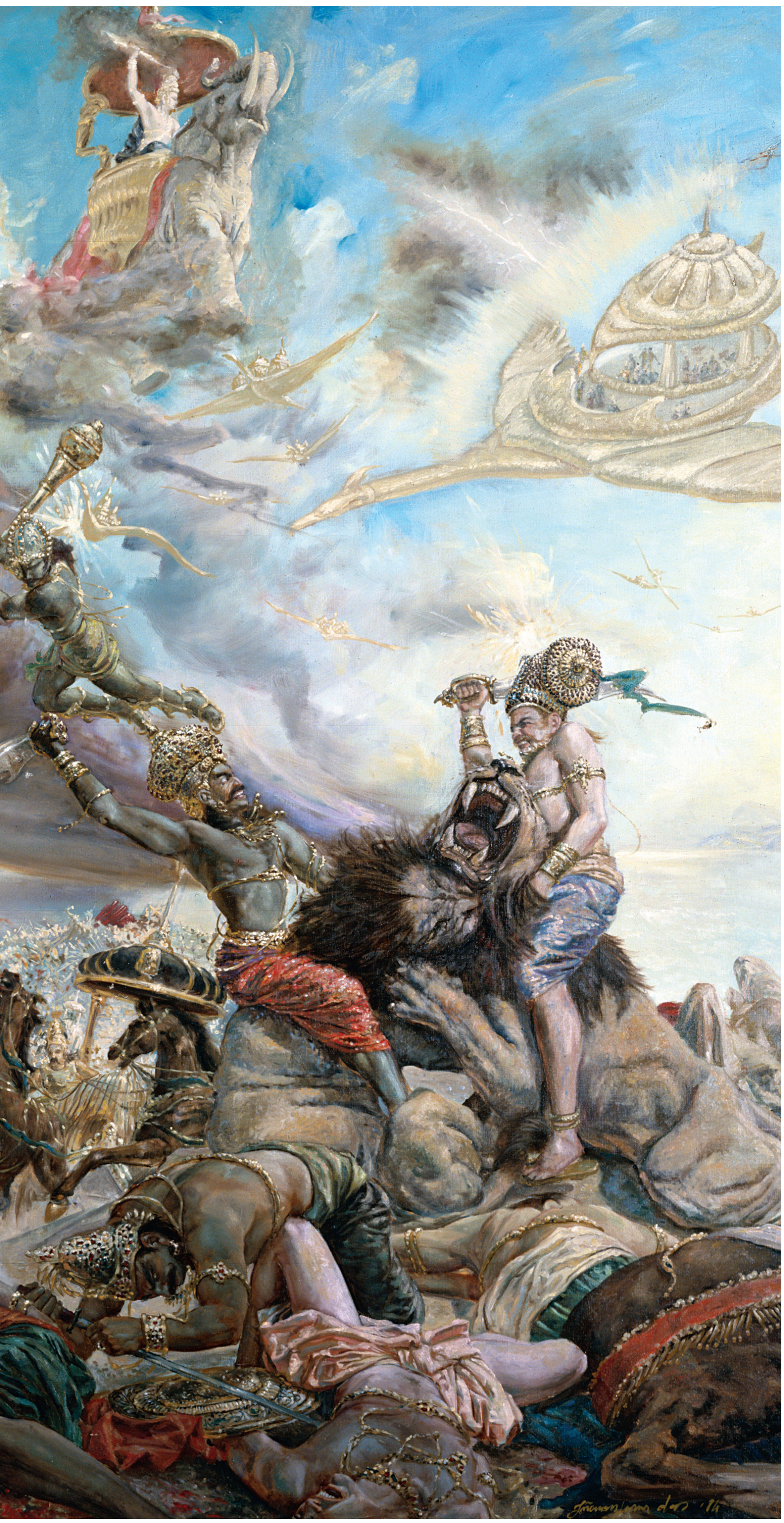
Vedic—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.

Viṣṇu—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

The Problem with

People who want to go to heaven may not know exactly what they're in for.



Painting by Jñānañjana Dāsa

Above: Attacks by demoniac forces sometimes disturb the enjoyment of even the residents of heaven.

Paradise

by Mukunda Mālā Dāsa

ONE MORNING when going through an Indian daily, I came across the obituary section and a list of deceased people being fondly remembered by their close relatives and friends. Each departed soul was given the title *svargavāsī,* "a resident of heaven." Although modern secular education teaches nothing about life on other planets—and knows nothing about it—I was surprised to see that people still believe their departed relative attained heaven. Has this person really gone to heaven? I wondered. Was he qualified to enter heaven and enjoy the heavenly delights and pleasures? What if he was a criminal or a butcher—could he still go there? And if he did make it, is it all he'd hoped it would be?

Heaven and Hell: Myth or Reality?

Scientists would have us believe that heaven and hell are mythical concepts found in religious scriptures. They feel such ideas were propagated to encourage people to lead moral lives in the hope of attaining heaven after death. But scientists fail to adequately explain the nature and cause of this unlimited universe and its diversities. It is quite reasonable to believe in the existence of heaven and hell within this universe. We find that even on this planet different living conditions exist—from abject poverty to extreme luxury. Why shouldn't a similar disparity exist within the universe?

The Vedic scriptures give us a detailed account of life on other planets, including heaven. They tell us there are fourteen levels of planetary systems in the universe and the heavenly planets, known as Svargaloka, form one of them. They are above Bhūloka, the earthly planetary system. Above Svargaloka are still higher planets, the topmost being Satyaloka, or Brahmaloka, wherein resides Lord Brahmā, the chief engineer of this universe.

The happiness and pleasures experienced by the denizens of heaven are immensely superior to those found on earth. The chief of the administrative demigods, Indra, is the king of heaven. Indraloka, the planet where Indra resides, has gardens where one can associate with beautiful, angelic women and enjoy a profuse supply of *soma-rasa,* a celestial beverage. There are magnificent palaces, beautiful landscapes, and huge gardens with aromatic flowers. There are Gandharvas, celestial beings who constantly perform delightful music. These are the pleasures in the paradise of Indraloka. As one goes higher, beyond Indraloka into other celestial realms, the senses and their objects become subtler and the quality of sense enjoyment becomes greatly refined. In contrast to the heavenly planets, the sense enjoyment on earth is insignificant and is experienced on an extremely gross level.

Despite all the comforts and luxuries available on the higher planets, the Vedic scriptures often discourage us from going there.

Another feature of the higher planets is the difference in time scale. Scientists agree that the time on other planets is different from that of earth. The Vedic scriptures tell us that six months on earth equal twelve hours on Indraloka. The duration of life there is ten thousand years by our calculation.

Demigods like Indra, Candra, Varuṇa, and Vāyu inhabit the heavenly planets. People residing there are predominately in the mode of goodness, not much affected by the lower modes of passion and ignorance. They are all devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, highly pious souls who strictly adhere to religious principles.

No one can barge freely, without restriction, into the heavenly planets. Today's scientists try to enter various planets of outer space, and they claim to have succeeded in putting man on the moon. The Vedic scriptures reject such human attempts as childish. Just as countries restrict foreigners from entering, higher authorities restrict entrance to the heavenly planets. To enter the heavenly planets, one must have accumulated an immense supply of pious credits by performing many virtuous acts on earth. The *karma-kāṇḍa* ("path of works") portion of the Vedic literature recommends certain sacrifices for persons desiring to go to heaven.

The Temporary and Miserable Nature of Heaven

Despite all the comforts and luxuries available on the higher planets, the Vedic scriptures often discourage us from going there. As part of the material creation, heavenly planets are temporary by nature and will eventually be annihilated. Although their life span may appear infinitely great when compared to ours, it is insignificant when compared to eternity.

And the miseries of earth—birth, old age, disease, and death—exist even there. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.16) Kṛṣṇa says, *ā-brahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ punar āvartino 'rjuna:* "From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place." The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes how powerful demons frequently attack the demigods, who sometimes lose the ensuing battle. As a result, they lose their prestigious positions as controllers of the universe and are in constant anxiety.

Śrīla Prabhupāda compares the material world to a prison, where different criminals occupy various grades of cells. Depending on the severity of the crime, the criminal is put into a certain cell—the most horrible cells for the severest crime committed. Similarly this universe acts like a prison where the rebellious souls are sent to reform themselves and rectify their mistakes. Depending on our past activities, we are put into a certain living condition where we enjoy or suffer the results of our acts. For extremely pious acts, we are sent to heaven to enjoy godly delights. For sinful acts, we go to hell to suffer.

Sadly, even if someone qualifies to enter heaven, he will not be allowed to stay there permanently. Once he exhausts his accumulated pious credits, he must return to earth and start over again. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.21),

te taṁ bhuktvā svarga-lokaṁ viśālaṁ
kṣīṇe puṇye martya-lokaṁ viśanti
evaṁ trayī-dharmam anuprapannā
gatāgataṁ kāma-kāmā labhante

"When they have thus enjoyed vast heavenly sense pleasure and the results of their pious activities are exhausted, they return to this mortal planet again. Thus those who seek sense enjoyment by adhering to the principles of the three Vedic scriptures achieve only repeated birth and death."

The Spiritual World

Kṛṣṇa therefore encourages us to come to His own abode, the eternal spiritual world, full of bliss and knowledge, as opposed to the temporary, miserable material world. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.6) He gives us a glimpse of the nature of His abode so that we may feel attracted to go there:

na tad bhāsayate sūryo
na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ
yad gatvā na nivartante
tad dhāma paramaṁ mama

"That supreme abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by fire or electricity. Those who reach it never return to this material world." The spiritual world contains innumerable self-luminous Vaikuṇṭha planets, where there is no need of sunshine, moonlight, fire, or electricity. Here in the material world, we see that all-powerful time controls everything and gradually brings everything to an end. Debilitating time is missing from the spiritual world. In that atmosphere the lower material modes of ignorance and passion are absent. Everyone is on the platform of *śuddha-sattva,* pure goodness. The Supreme Lord is the chief leader there, and all the inhabitants assist in His loving service. There is no competition for leadership, and everyone is a follower of the Lord.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.21), “Instead of being elevated to the spiritual world, from which there is no longer any possibility of coming down, one simply revolves in the cycle of birth and death on higher and lower planetary systems. One should better take to the spiritual world to enjoy an eternal life full of bliss and knowledge and never return to this miserable material existence.”

The Purpose of Human Life

Human life is endowed with greater responsibility than animal life. Rather than focus our energy on obtaining better resources within the material world, we need to focus on how we can permanently solve the real problems of life, namely birth, old age, disease, and death. Otherwise we will simply keep going up and down the material world, as if situated on a Ferris wheel.

Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī, a great devotee of Lord Caitanya, considers the heavenly planets and the position of the demigods phantasmagoria—something imaginary, like flowers in the sky. A pure devotee is never allured by such heavenly opulences. Indeed, for a devotee engaged fully in the service of the Lord, external situations do not matter at all. As Lord Śiva explains in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.17.28), “Devotees solely engaged in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, never fear any condition of life. For them the heavenly planets, liberation, and the hellish planets are all the same, for such devotees are interested only in the service of the Lord.”

A devotee wants to always remember Kṛṣṇa and serve Him. In a situation of extreme comfort and luxury, as provided in the heavens, one can get carried away by sensual pleasures and forget the Lord. Being conscious of this danger, a devotee focuses all his energy to achieve the eternal spiritual world. When he passes away, he does not want to be called a *svarga-vāsī*, a resident of heaven, but a *Vaikuṇṭhavāsī*, a resident of Goloka, the spiritual world.

Mukunda Mālā Dāsa has a degree in engineering and serves full time in ISKCON Mumbai. He is part of the India BTG team and teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness to students.

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How to Put BTG in Your Will

After providing for their families and loved ones, subscribers may want to put *Back to Godhead* in their wills, thus helping to assure the long-term future of this work. In the USA, bequests are free of estate tax and can substantially reduce the amount of your assets claimed by the government.* You can give needed support for *Back to Godhead* by simply including the following words in your will: *I give, devise, and bequeath to* Back to Godhead, *18024 NW 112th Blvd., Alachua, FL 32615* (insert amount being given here) *to be used to support* Back to Godhead *and its related activities, including the Krishna.com website.*

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It is recommended that a lawyer help in drafting or amending a will.

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*If you live outside the USA, check the estate tax laws for your country.

The ART of DEVOTION

In the artistic traditions of India, which are rooted in its spiritual heritage, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa finds inspiration for her spiritual practices.

by Indulekhā Devī Dāsī

“I worship that transcendental seat, known as Śveta-dvīpa . . . where every word is a song, every gait is a dance, and the flute is the favorite attendant.”
(Śrī *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.56)

WHAT IS THE purpose of art? In art college I learned that it is a way to express something about oneself, something original. Fair comments, but what about the point of it all? What should be the reason for a work of art, a dance, or a piece of music? For many, it is the creation itself, or even the desire for the fame that comes with making something never created before.

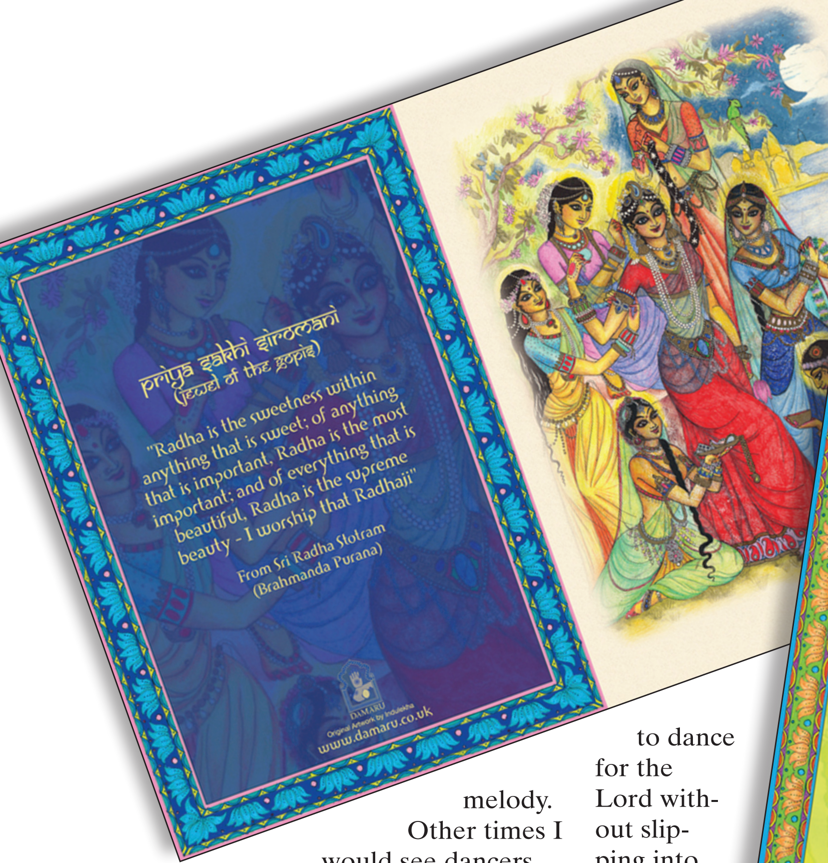
I left art college with this question burning in my heart, having been introduced to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by a friend at school. I read Prabhupāda’s books, but spent more time absorbing myself in the beauty of the artwork depicting the pastimes of God in all of their variety. Almost immediately I started to work on producing detailed illustrations of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His Vṛndāvana pastimes. I discarded many of those over the years, but they served as foundations for later ideas.

I stayed in the ashram for some time and then left for India, where the beauty of classical dance and music filled my senses. Sometimes I heard strains of the sweetest music coming from someone’s house or garden, and I would often stand in one place until I’d memorized the

Ajay Chag

"Traditional India has a wonderful way of discovering the spiritual essence of any aspect of our human experience and creating powerful art as a consequence," says Indulekha, shown here with a taus (similar to the more familiar esraj) and in a typical Bharata Natyam dance pose.

Ananta Śakti Dāsa

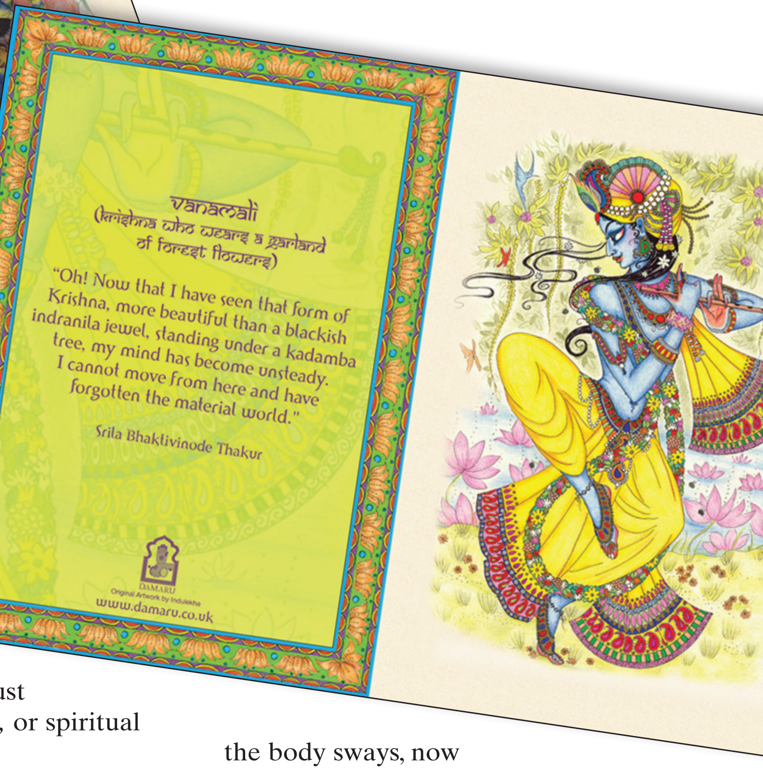


priya sakhi siromani
(jewel of the gopis)

"Radha is the sweetness within anything that is sweet; of anything that is important, Radha is the most important; and of everything that is beautiful, Radha is the supreme beauty - I worship that Radhaji"

From Sri Radha Stotram
(Brahmanda Purana)

DAMARU
Original Artwork by Indulekha
www.damaru.co.uk



vanamali
(krishna who wears a garland of forest flowers)

"Oh! Now that I have seen that form of Krishna, more beautiful than a blackish indranila jewel, standing under a kadamba tree, my mind has become unsteady. I cannot move from here and have forgotten the material world."

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur

DAMARU
Original Artwork by Indulekha
www.damaru.co.uk

Indulekha has used her artistic talent to produce a line of greeting cards with Kṛṣṇa conscious themes. Opposite, she plays a taus modeled after a peacock.

melody. Other times I would see dancers—large black eyes, faces alive with expression, feet both powerful and elegant with the sound of dozens of tiny bells. I decided I'd make myself an artist for God, for Kṛṣṇa, and this would be my meaning, the reason for being an artist.

Little did I realize then to what depth the ancient sages of India had researched music, dance, and art. Traditional India has a wonderful way of discovering the spiritual essence of any aspect of our human experience and creating powerful art as a consequence. An ancient story tells of the sage Bharata, author of *Nāṭya Śāstra,* India's foremost treatise on the performing arts. Brahmā, engineer of the universe, gave the *Nāṭya Śāstra* to Bharata, who along with groups of Gandharvas and Apsarās (celestial musicians and dancers) performed before Lord Śiva. On seeing this astonishing performance, Lord Śiva remembered His own majestic dance, the *tāṇḍava-nṛtya,* and he and his consort, Pārvatī, taught Bharata the art of dance, which was later brought to earth.

Dance

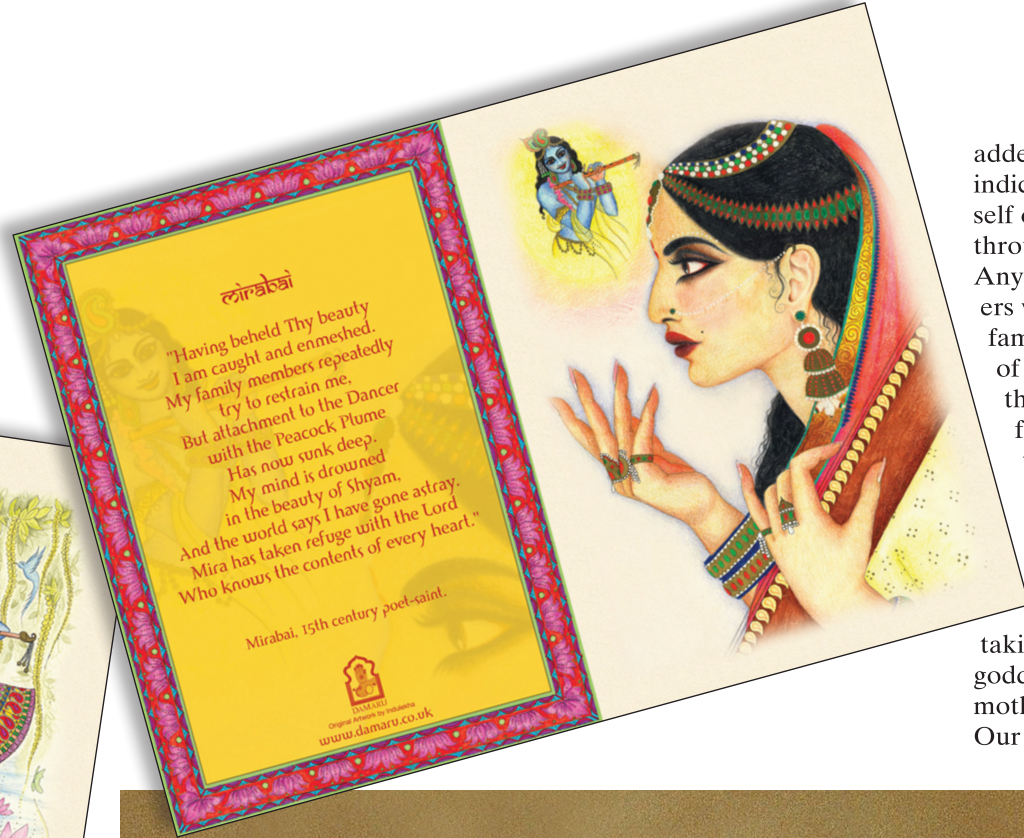
Spiritual people sometimes see dance as narcissistic. Is it possible to dance for the Lord without slipping into the desire for fame and adulation? I believe so, but it must be done as *sādhana,* or spiritual practice.

In 1993 I started Bharata Natyam dance training with Guru Prakash Yadagudde, resident teacher at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, an organization with centers in India and elsewhere for the promotion of the Indian cultural arts. Alongside this, I studied Karnatic (South Indian) music to better understand how dance and music are woven together. I discovered I had an aptitude for singing, something I was only vaguely aware of before. Very soon I had taken up singing at diploma level and was even teaching.

The training for Bharata Natyam is arduous and requires commitment for success, but I became captivated by its spiritual depth and the exquisite beauty of the movements. In his book *Bharata Natyam,* Sunil Kothari describes the dance beautifully: "It is one of the most subtle, sophisticated and graceful styles of dance-art in the world. Flowers open in the hands of the dancer, and birds fly off from the tips of the fingers, the body sways, now in pride, now in devotion. . . . Such a dance drama, performed according to the most delicate nuances of a musical piece, or a poem, through the vehicle of one body, is surely unmatched in any art."

As a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, I had learned that *bhakti* is the yoga of action, a way in which to channel one's occupation into the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa simply by engaging oneself in a mood of devotion. As a dancer, I discovered this to be true. After the initial austerity of learning to express myself in a way alien to my native culture, I learned to portray the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with His characteristic mischief, playfulness, and cleverness. I spent hours in front of a mirror, trying to emulate Kṛṣṇa and His devotees as naturally as possible.

The famous dancer Rukmini Devi Arundale said, "A truly spiritual artiste is one who also forgets himself and in that self-forgetfulness achieves bliss which is called *ānanda.*" It should be



mirabai

"Having beheld Thy beauty
I am caught and enmeshed.
My family members repeatedly
try to restrain me,
But attachment to the Dancer
with the Peacock Plume
Has now sunk deep.
My mind is drowned
in the beauty of Shyam,
And the world says I have gone astray.
Mira has taken refuge with the Lord
Who knows the contents of every heart."

Mirabai, 15th century poet-saint.

DAMARU
Original Artwork by Indulekha
www.damaru.co.uk

added here that self-forgetfulness indicates that the dancer allows herself or himself to become a vessel through which a deity is channelled. Anyone who has seen great dancers will have realized that their fame has come about not because of their physical technique, as there are many technically perfect dancers, but for the way in which their portrayal of divinity can make a two-hour performance seem like two minutes.

There is something awesome about a dancer who appears on the stage clad in red and taking on the personality of a fierce goddess, then re-enters as the gentle mother of Lord Rāma, Kauśalya. Our emotions follow the transfor-

Ananta Śakti Dāsa

mations, and we become absorbed in thoughts and emotions related to the Lord and His servants.

Music

My journey into music has been one of the most spiritually transformative experiences of my life. Three years ago I started a BMus degree in North Indian/Sikh music with Professor Surinder Singh, head of an organization called Raj Academy, a London-based group focused on the healing aspects of Indian music. Traditional Indian music is based on something called raga, a concept with many layers of meaning. On the most basic level, raga is a musical scale of five to seven ascending and descending *swaras,* or notes. There are thousands of ragas, many of them having the same *swaras.* What makes the difference is that each scale is given character and *rasa,* or flavor, by placing different emphasis on certain notes and relating them to each other in various ways. A raga, then, is an expression of profound emotion in all of its complexity. Ragas can be spiritual or mundane, depending on their musicology, or the way in which they were designed.

> ***Many of our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava predecessors were expert musicians with extensive knowledge of raga music, poetic meter, and taal.***

I once saw someone who exemplified what it means to devote one's life to the *sādhana* of art as devotion. Pandit Ram Narayan is known to many as the sarangi maestro of India. The sarangi is an instrument thought to have been created by Rāvaṇa, the ten-headed demon of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and an expert musician. The word *sarangi* means "all colors," indicating that the instrument can capture every emotion, both mundane and spiritual. Panditji explained to the audience that the deity was indeed present in a raga. He then played the raga Śrī, the personification of Pārvatī, consort of Lord Śiva. When Panditji had finished, silence filled the room, the audience initially too stunned to applaud. The presence of the goddess was undeniable.

India's science of music is almost lost these days, even to Indian musicians, many of whom consider much of what is said in ancient texts to be mythology. One of the most famous musicologists of the Vedic period was Nārada, thought by many to be the Nārada Muni of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. In his *Nāradīya Śikṣa,* the sage outlines ragas and their relation to mood, colors, planets, chakras, and other esoteric factors fundamentally connected to sound and its manifestation in the world. In particular, his text is the first to describe what are known as *śrutis,* or the sounds that exist between the twelve commonly used notes. Ragas are played or sung with high or low emphasis on the *śrutis.* Although to the average person these minute changes in sound are imperceptible, they are perceived subtly and can alter our moods and feelings. The conscious use of *śrutis* and the characteristic sliding notes of ragas are what make Indian music obviously different from the music of the West.

Many of our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava predecessors were expert musicians with extensive knowledge of raga music, poetic meter, and taal, or specific rhythms. Jayadeva Gosvāmī in his *Gīta Govinda* names the raga to accompany each poem and explains its appearance and character. Caṇḍīdāsa, a poet loved by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, wrote his *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtana* in different ragas, as did Govinda Dāsa and Vidyāpati in their treatises. While our focus should always be on the holy name rather than our expertise in music, I believe we can only gain by having some understanding of the effect of raga music and applying it to our *bhajanas* and *kīrtanas.*

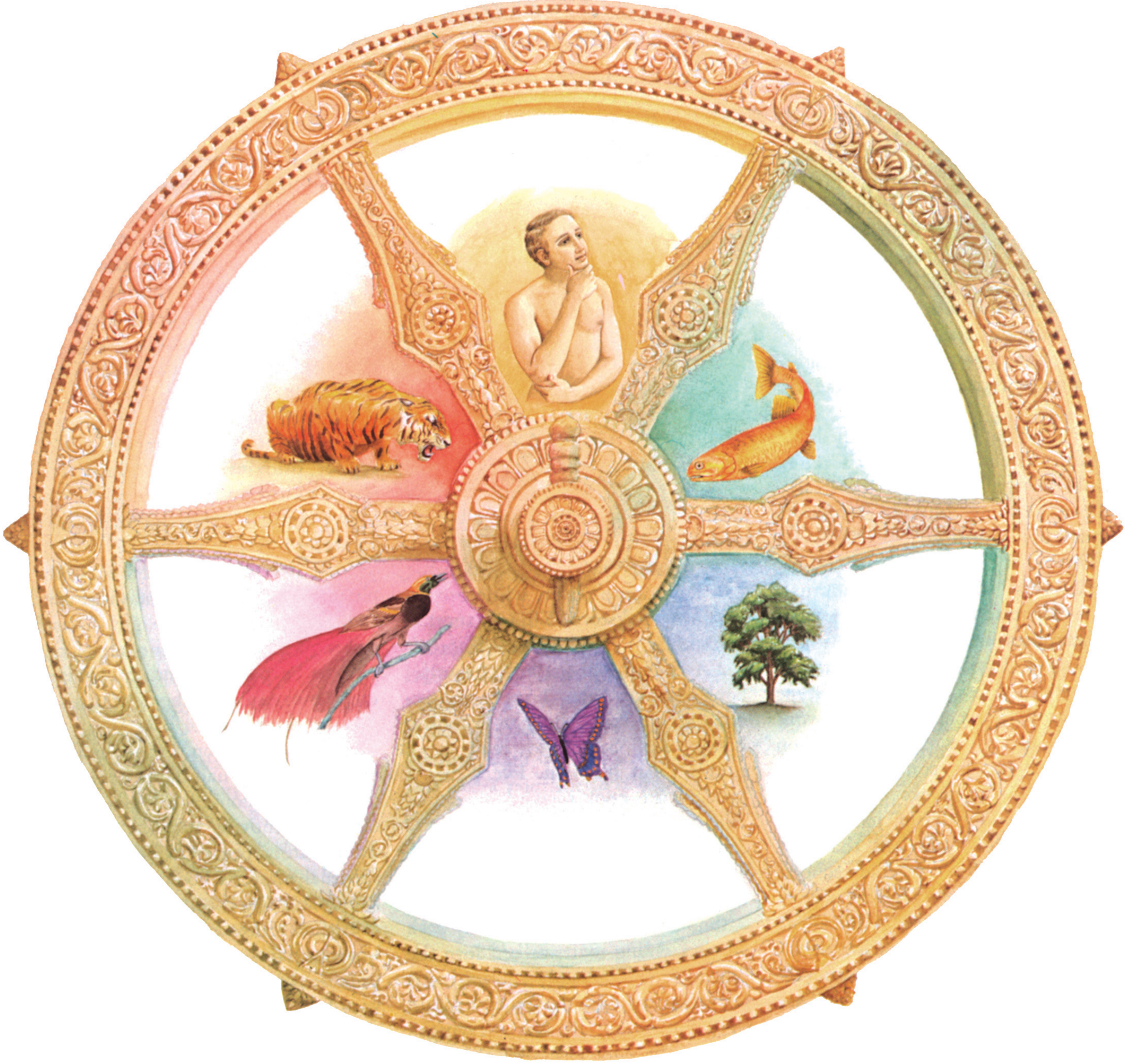
Art

A dancer engages the body in the service of the Lord, a singer, the ears and voice. For the artist, the eyes are absorbed in the beauty of the form of God, which manifests from the heart and onto the canvas. Hours become moments as Śrī Kṛṣṇa's form appears—His restless eyes, His rain-cloud-blue skin, His curling black hair. A song by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says, "O son of Nanda, let me worship You with the lamplight of my eyes."

As a spiritual artist, I have created Nataki, a website dedicated to the propagation of spiritual dance, music, and artwork. The word *nāṭakī* means a woman performer, usually a dancer. In ancient India this would almost always imply a devotional career as a temple performer. I created Nataki because of my deep belief that all healing, all devotion, and all spiritual advancement can be attained through the medium of being an artist. While I'm still a student, I hope that my website will encourage others to realize, as I have, the depth, beauty, and devotion inherently present in Indian traditional art forms. Ancient India has made every possible facet of life into art. Indeed, this is perhaps the most outstanding contribution of the Vedic literature. We all seek a way to engage our senses in something that has absolute meaning for our souls.

Indulekhā Devī Dāsī, who lives in London, has been a member of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement since 1988. She regularly performs as a dancer and is establishing herself as a teacher of Indian dance and music, as well as promoting her artwork. Her website is www.nataki.co.uk.

Illustration by Rañcora Dāsa



Freedom from Never-Ending Karma

Everyone in the material world is subject to the laws of karma, except the pure devotees of the Lord.

by Nārada Ṛṣi Dāsa

IN SYDNEY, Australia, 1993, my good friend showed me one of the most attractive beaches in the world, with crystal-clear water and snow-white sand. As we walked along the beach, I commented that the scenery was extremely beautiful. Then we both reflected on the fact that nothing is permanent in this world and we cannot remain in any situation forever. I thought about how we should use this temporary lifetime to stop the repetition of birth and death and be freed from the clutches of endless karma.

Karma is broadly defined as material activities and their reactions. People commonly paraphrase the concept of karma as "What goes around comes around" or, as the Bible states, "As you sow, so shall you reap."

Śrī Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta explains that karma arises from forgetfulness of our essential *svarūpa,* or form—our identity as servants of God. Not understanding karma, the living entity keeps trying to dominate material nature, with suffering as the result. Materialistic activities

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The soul's karma-driven journey through various bodies is called saṁsāra-cakra, *the wheel of repeated birth and death.*

keep us bound within the material realm in an unbroken chain of repeated births and deaths. Without proper direction, the *jīva* (living entity) can't escape, like a bird caught in a hunter's net that futilely flaps its wings. Stuck within the material world, entwined by the three modes of material nature, the living entity thinks that sense enjoyment is the ultimate goal.

The laws of karma are intricate and difficult to understand. The ancient Vedic literature, however, clearly explains entanglement in material nature and how to get free of it. By following the prescription of Vedic philosophy, as taught by pure teachers in disciplic succession, we are sure to cut the bonds of karma and achieve spiritual perfection.

We can cut the bonds of our karma and achieve complete freedom, happiness, and spiritual perfection.

Caught up in Desire

Being part of the Supreme Lord, the living entity is spiritual by nature, but its sheer desire for sense gratification (pleasing the mind and senses) is a prime cause of material bondage. Trying to enjoy in material life, the living entity stays within the unbroken cycle of birth, death, old age, and disease. Continually performing material activities, the soul roams from one species to another without end. This is called reincarnation or *saṁsāra-cakra,* the wheel of birth and death.

People often have a hard time understanding the concept of reincarnation. First one has to understand the soul, God, and their relationship. Kṛṣṇa says that the soul is eternally part of Him. As such, both God and the soul are eternal, as is their relationship. Rejecting God, the soul takes on one body after another, supplied by God in response to the soul's desire to enjoy separately from Him. This is reincarnation. To become free from this bondage, we must endeavor to reestablish our eternal relationship with the Lord.

We stay in the material world because it seems beautiful and attractive to us. But experience should teach us that it contains many cruelties. By the law of karma, we suffer because of our own acts. The Lord gives us independence to act according to our individual propensities, and we reap the results. The most devastating karmic reaction is endless entanglement in the material world, a dangerous place. Scripture explains that in the material world one living entity survives on another (*jīvo jīvasya jīvanam*). The tiger in the forest catches the deer and enjoys the feast. The rich oppress the poor, and the strong overpower the weak. That is the law of nature.

God is not cruel, but He has created this system to keep balance in nature. It is important to understand that when the tiger kills its prey, it is free of sinful reaction or bad karma. Animals act out of their natural propensity (*dharma*) to survive. On the other hand, when man does the same activities, such as slaughtering cows or even killing an insect, he is liable to be punished.

Human beings possess a developed brain and the potential to cultivate higher knowledge and reestablish their relationship with the Lord. Of the 8,400,000 species, humans are superior to all others because of their ability to develop spiritual knowledge. By acting in that knowledge, they can become free from the bondage of karma. If we take to spiritual life wholeheartedly, we can cut the bonds of our karma and achieve complete freedom, happiness, and spiritual perfection.

Mṛgāri Transformed

Caitanya-caritāmṛta recounts a story from *Skanda Purāṇa* about a hunter named Mṛgāri (literally "killer of animals"), who was killing many animals and leaving others half dead to suffer. When he took shelter of the great devotee Nārada Muni, who became his spiritual master, he gave up his sinful activities and would not even step on an ant. By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on the order of Nārada Muni, he came to an elevated spiritual position. His devotional service destroyed the karmic reactions to his sinful activities. (Kṛṣṇa openly declares that those who render devotional service to Him are exempt from all sinful reactions, but it is a great offense to intentionally commit sinful activities on the strength of devotional service.)

Mṛgāri was saved by taking shelter of Nārada Muni, Kṛṣṇa's representative. That's the authorized way to turn to Kṛṣṇa. In his *Bhagavad-gītā* commentary, Śrīla Prabhupāda presents the metaphor of two birds sitting in a tree. One bird, which represents the individual soul, is eating, and the other, which represents Kṛṣṇa in the heart, is simply watching. The eating bird enjoys the fruits of the tree (karma), some sweet, some bitter. But the moment it turns its face toward its friend Kṛṣṇa, it becomes free from karma. By not taking shelter of the Lord through his devotees, souls suffer the results of their actions until they realize the higher truth that they must surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa has given us freedom, but misuse of that freedom results in perpetual bondage in the material world. The material energy conditions us to act in certain ways, in ignorance. Lacking transcendental knowledge, rebellious souls are born again and again because they repeatedly commit sinful acts. They continuously engage their senses in selfish gratification rather than in devotional service to the Supreme Lord, who is Hṛṣīkeśa, the master of the senses.

The living entities are constitutionally eternal servants of the Supreme Lord. Those who reject His direct service must serve Him nonetheless. Entangled in conditional life, they are forced to serve His material energy (*māyā*). Unlike the Lord's devotees, they swim in the ocean of karma and never become free from it.

Only pure devotional service can break the bonds of endless karma. Kṛṣṇa Himself recommends, "All that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.27) Kṛṣṇa wants us to direct all of our activities toward Him.

Prescribed Practices

The Vedic scriptures recommend that we regularly practice some simple techniques to become pure devotees of the Lord.

We should always chant the Lord's holy names: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Chanting this *mahā-mantra* is the prime process for cleansing our heart, mind, and senses of the accumulated dirt of many lifetimes—the "dirt" being material reactions and desires.

To understand higher truths—including the self, its relationship with God, the intricacies of karma, the process of reincarnation, and liberation—we should regularly study the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* and other Vedic books that promote pure devotion to the Supreme Lord.

To be free from all karma, good and bad, we must eat only food that has been offered to Kṛṣṇa. He accepts only pure vegetarian food, and we can receive the remnants as His mercy (*prasādam*). Kṛṣṇa clearly states, "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it." (Bg. 9.26) He wants pure vegetarian food, not meat, fish, eggs, or liquor. When we offer vegetarian food with love, devotion, and deep faith, our offering becomes free of sin and karmic reaction. Those who prepare food for their own sense enjoyment, however, eat only sin. (Bg. 3.13)

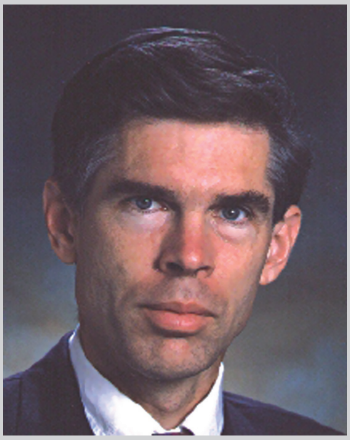
Vegetarianism is also important because it means we avoid sinning by killing animals or connecting ourselves with animal killing. The law of karma dictates that those who kill animals and eat them will be killed and eaten in their next life.

We must also seek the association of devotees trying to be free from karma. Just as contact with a sick man can infect one with his disease, so contact with Kṛṣṇa or His pure devotee elevates one spiritually. We can then be cured of what Śrīla Prabhupāda called "the material disease."

Cultivating Kṛṣṇa consciousness reminds us that both suffering and enjoyment come uninvited according to our good and bad activities. But pure devotion to the Lord surpasses everything.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is known as *bhakta-vatsala*, or one who is very merciful to His devotees. He is more concerned about our going back home, back to Godhead, then we are concerned about Him. He wants us to get out of this miserable material world to join Him in His eternal abode. "As all surrender unto me,"

IN MEMORIAM



SADĀPUTA DĀSA (Richard L. Thompson) was born in Binghamton, New York, in 1947. A disciple of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, he was a founding member of the Bhaktivedanta Institute. He passed away on September 18.

In 1974, he received his Ph.D. in mathematics from Cornell University, where he specialized in probability theory and statistical mechanics. He went on to do research in quantum physics and mathematical biology at the State University of New York at Binghamton, Cambridge University in the United Kingdom, and the La Jolla Institute in San Diego.

Sadāputa Dāsa wrote eight books, produced six videos on science and philosophy, and wrote many articles for scientific journals and for *Back to Godhead.* His last book was titled *God & Science: Divine Causation and the Laws of Nature.* His previous book *Maya: The World As Virtual Reality* explains how this world can be considered a virtual reality. His explanation accommodates empirical evidence for many phenomena that contemporary theories of consciousness cannot explain. Another book, *Mysteries of the Sacred Universe,* discusses evidence of advanced astronomical knowledge in India's ancient *Purāṇas.*

Sadāputa Dāsa also designed exhibits using computer animation and multimedia techniques to present the Vedic cosmology and worldview.

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millennia ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch, jh,** and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**ge-h**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh.** So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or his great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

Kṛṣṇa says, "I will reward them accordingly." (Bg. 4.11)

The Brāhmaṇa & the Cobbler

Here's an example of two of the Lord's devotees, showing how He looked at their devotion and rewarded them according to His promise in the *Gītā.*

Once, Nārada Muni was going to meet Lord Nārāyaṇa (Kṛṣṇa in His four-armed form) in the spiritual world. A *smārta brāhmaṇa* (one attached to rituals but lacking devotion) and a poor cobbler both requested Nārada to ask the Lord when they would go back home, back to Godhead. They also asked Nārada to report what the Lord was doing when Nārada saw Him.

After Nārada's departure, the *smārta brāhmaṇa* kept busy with rituals aimed at gaining wealth and perfection, while the poor cobbler simply chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa as he repaired shoes to maintain his family.

When Nārada returned, the *smārta brāhmaṇa* asked him, "My dear Nārada Muni, please tell me what was my Lord doing when you saw Him?"

"Oh!" Nārada exclaimed. "The Lord was passing an elephant through the eye of a needle."

Blinded by false ego and fake devotion, the *smārta brāhmaṇa* said, "That's impossible! How can an elephant pass through the eye of a needle?"

When the *smārta brāhmaṇa* asked when he would go back to Godhead, Nārada Muni replied that he would take as many millions of years as there are leaves on a tamarind tree.

When the cobbler heard about the Lord's passing an elephant through the eye of a needle, he exclaimed, "Yes! Yes! It is possible! My Lord can make impossible things possible. Nothing is impossible for Him. He can easily pass an elephant through the eye of a needle, just as he packs millions of trees within the seeds of a tamarind tree."

Nārada then told the cobbler he would return to the Lord at the end of that very life.

What a wonderful arrangement of the Supreme Lord! The cobbler's simple devotion qualified him to be free from the karmic cycle and to go back home, back to Godhead. The *smārta brāhmaṇa's* pride and pretentiousness were obstacles to his spiritual success.

When, like the cobbler, a person knows the simple process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and has some love and devotion for the Lord, his efforts become successful. Others, like the *smārta brāhmaṇa,* fail, despite knowing many things. The *smārta* failed because of his incorrect motives, while the poor cobbler, in spite of his humble occupation, was favored by the Supreme Lord and became eligible to go back home, back to Godhead.

Why not all of us? Let's get rid of all our karma. If a poor cobbler can do it, then surely we can. And let's do it wholeheartedly. Rich or poor, all are subject to the laws of karma, but those who are Kṛṣṇa conscious surpass everything. Anyone who sincerely chants Hare Kṛṣṇa, whether a big industrialist or a pauper, can attain the Lord's abode. The *Bhāgavatam* promises that chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa can burn all our karma, just as a forest fire burns gigantic trees to ashes and the sun dissolves the fog by its rays.

Spiritual activities are beyond the laws of karma, and therefore no bondage can stop or bind pure devotees within the material world. We too can escape by cutting the bonds of never-ending karma with continuous, unflinching, and determined devotional service. That service will always remind us of our natural position as the eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa. It is the positive pathway to lead us back to His abode.

Nārada Ṛṣi Dāsa holds a master's degree in philosophy and religion. He currently lives with his wife, Mohinī Rādhā Devī Dāsī, at Hare Krishna Land, Mumbai, India, where he teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Referred to as "the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

MEDITATION ON THE LORD'S FORM

Nārada Muni instructs Dhruva Mahārāja to perform devotional service in Vṛndāvana by chanting a mantra and meditating on the eternal form of the Lord.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 8

41 धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाख्यं य इच्छेच्छ्रेय आत्मनः
एकं ह्येव हरेस्तत्र कारणं पादसेवनम्

dharmārtha-kāma-mokṣākhyaṁ
ya icchec chreya ātmanaḥ
ekaṁ hy eva hares tatra
kāraṇaṁ pāda-sevanam

dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa—the four principles religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation; *ākhyam*—by the name; *yaḥ*—who; *icchet*—may desire; *śreyaḥ*—the goal of life; *ātmanaḥ*—of the self; *ekam hi eva*—only the one; *hareḥ*—of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *tatra*—in that; *kāraṇam*—the cause; *pāda-sevanam*—worshiping the lotus feet.

Any person who desires the fruits of the four principles religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, and at the end, liberation, should engage himself in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for worship of His lotus feet yields the fulfillment of all of these.

PURPORT: In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said that only with the sanction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead can the demigods offer benedictions. Therefore, whenever any sacrifice is offered to a demigod, the Supreme Lord in the form of *nārāyaṇa-śilā,* or *śālagrāma-śilā,* is put forward to observe the sacrifice. Actually, the demigods cannot give any benediction without the sanction of the Supreme Lord. Nārada Muni, therefore, advised that even for religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, or liberation, one should approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead, offer prayers, and ask for the fulfillment of one's desire at the lotus feet of the Lord. That is real intelligence. ① An intelligent person never goes to demigods to pray for anything. He goes directly to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the cause of all benediction.

As Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said in *Bhagavad-gītā,* performance of ritualistic ceremonies is not actually religion. ② The real path of religion is to surrender at the lotus feet

(1) Why does an intelligent person go directly to the Supreme Lord, and not to the demigods, for the fulfillment of desires?
(2) What does Lord Kṛṣṇa say is the real path of religion?

of the Lord. For one who is actually surrendered to the lotus feet of the Lord, there is no question of any separate endeavor for economic development. A devotee engaged in service to the Lord is not disappointed in the satisfaction of his senses. If he wants to satisfy his senses, Kṛṣṇa fulfills that desire. ③ As far as liberation is concerned, any devotee fully engaged in the service of the Lord is already liberated; therefore there is no separate necessity for his liberation.

Nārada Muni therefore advised Dhruva Mahārāja to take shelter of Vāsudeva, Lord Kṛṣṇa, and engage himself in the way that his mother had advised, for that would help him fulfill his desire. In this verse Nārada Muni has especially stressed the devotional service of the Lord as the only way. In other words, even if one is full of material desires, he can continue his devotional service to the Lord, and all his desires will be fulfilled.

42

तत्तात गच्छ भद्रं ते यमुनायास्तटं शुचि
पुण्यं मधुवनं यत्र सान्निध्यं नित्यदा हरेः

tat tāta gaccha bhadraṁ te
yamunāyās taṭaṁ śuci
puṇyaṁ madhuvanaṁ yatra
sānnidhyaṁ nityadā hareḥ

tat—that; *tāta*—my dear son; *gaccha*—go; *bhadram*—good fortune; *te*—for you; *yamunāyāḥ*—of the Yamunā; *taṭam*—bank; *śuci*—being purified; *puṇyam*—the holy; *madhu-vanam*—of the name Madhuvana; *yatra*—where; *sānnidhyam*—being nearer; *nityadā*—always; *hareḥ*—of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

My dear boy, I therefore wish all good fortune for you. You should go to the bank of the Yamunā, where there is a virtuous forest named Madhuvana, and there be purified. Just by going there, one draws nearer to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who always lives there.

PURPORT: Both Nārada Muni and Sunīti, the mother of Dhruva Mahārāja, advised Dhruva Mahārāja to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Now, Nārada Muni is especially giving him directions how this worship of the Supreme Person can very quickly fructify. ④ He recommends that Dhruva Mahārāja go to the bank of the Yamunā, where there is a forest of the name Madhuvana, and begin his meditation and worship there.

(3) Why does a devotee not need to ask the Lord for liberation?
(4) Where does Nārada recommend that Dhruva go to perform devotional service?
(5) Why is it easy to approach Lord Kṛṣṇa at holy places?
(6) Which four Indian holy places are known as the four *dhāmas*?
(7) Why do hellish conditions not affect Nārada Muni?

Places of pilgrimage yield a special advantage for a devotee in quickly advancing his spiritual life. ⑤ Lord Kṛṣṇa lives everywhere, but still it is very easy to approach Him in holy places of pilgrimage because these places are inhabited by great sages. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that He lives wherever His devotees are chanting the glories of His transcendental activities.

⑥ There are many places of pilgrimage in India, and especially prominent are Badarī-nārāyaṇa, Dvārakā, Rāmeśvara, and Jagannātha Purī. These sacred places are called the four *dhāmas. Dhāma* refers to a place where one can immediately contact the Supreme Lord. To go to Badarī-nārāyaṇa one has to pass through Hardwar on the path to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Similarly, there are other holy places of pilgrimage, such as Prayāga (Allahabad) and Mathurā, and the topmost of them all is Vṛndāvana.

Unless one is very advanced in spiritual life, it is recommended that he live in such holy places and execute devotional service there. But an advanced devotee like Nārada Muni who is engaged in preaching work can serve the Supreme Lord anywhere. Sometimes he even goes to the hellish planets. ⑦ Hellish conditions do not affect Nārada Muni because he is engaged in greatly responsible activities in devotional service. According to the statement of Nārada Muni, Madhuvana, which is still existing in the Vṛndāvana area, in the district of Mathurā, is a most sacred place. Many saintly persons still live there and engage in the devotional service of the Lord.

There are twelve forests in the area of Vṛndāvana, and Madhuvana is one of them. Pilgrims from all parts of India assemble together and visit all twelve of these forests. There are five forests on the eastern bank of the Yamunā: Bhadravana, Bilvavana, Lauhavana, Bhāṇḍīravana, and Mahāvana. On the western side of the bank there are seven: Madhuvana, Tālavana, Kumudavana, Bahulāvana, Kāmyavana, Khadiravana, and Vṛndāvana. In those twelve forests there are different *ghāṭas,* or bathing places. They are listed as follows: (1) Avimukta, (2) Adhirūḍha, (3) Guhya-tīrtha, (4) Prayāga-tīrtha, (5) Kanakhala, (6) Tinduka-tīrtha, (7) Sūrya-tīrtha, (8) Vaṭasvāmī, (9) Dhruva-ghāṭa (Dhruva-ghāṭa, where there are many nice trees of fruits and flowers, is famous because Dhruva Mahārāja meditated and underwent severe penances and austerities there in an elevated spot), (10) Ṛṣi-tīrtha, (11) Mokṣa-tīrtha, (12) Budha-tīrtha, (13) Gokarṇa, (14) Kṛṣṇagaṅgā, (15) Vaikuṇṭha, (16) Asi-kuṇḍa, (17) Catuḥ-sāmudrika-kūpa, (18) Akrūra-tīrtha (when Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were going to Mathurā in the chariot driven by Akrūra, all of them took baths in this ghāṭa), (19) Yājñika-vipra-sthāna, (20) Kubjā-kūpa, (21) Raṅga-sthala, (22) Mañcha-sthala, (23) Mallayuddha-sthāna, and (24) Daśāśvamedha.

43 स्नात्वानुसवनं तस्मिन् कालिन्द्याः सलिले शिवे
कृत्वोचितानि निवसन्नात्मनः कल्पितासनः

snātvānusavanaṁ tasmin
kālindyāḥ salile śive
kṛtvocitāni nivasann
ātmanaḥ kalpitāsanaḥ

snātvā—after taking bath; *anusavanam*—three times; *tasmin*—in that; *kālindyāḥ*—in the River Kālindī (the Yamunā); *salile*—in the water; *śive*—which is very auspicious; *kṛtvā*—performing; *ucitāni*—suitable; *nivasan*—sitting; *ātmanaḥ*—of the self; *kalpita-āsanaḥ*—having prepared a sitting place.

Nārada Muni instructed: My dear boy, in the waters of the Yamunā River, which is known as Kālindī, you should take three baths daily because the water is very auspicious, sacred, and clear. After bathing, you should perform the necessary regulative principles for aṣṭāṅga-yoga and then sit down on your āsana [sitting place] in a calm and quiet position.

PURPORT: It appears from this statement that Dhruva Mahārāja had already been instructed how to practice the eightfold yoga system, which is known as *aṣṭāṅga-yoga.* This system is explained in our *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is,* in the chapter entitled, "Dhyāna-yoga." It is understood that in *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* one practices settling the mind and then concentrating it on the form of Lord Viṣṇu, as will be described in the following verses. It is clearly stated here that *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* is not a bodily gymnastic exercise, but a practice to concentrate the mind on the form of Viṣṇu. Before sitting on his *āsana,* which is also described in *Bhagavad-gītā,* one has to cleanse himself very nicely in clear or sacred water thrice daily. The water of the Yamunā is naturally very clear and pure, and thus if anyone bathes there three times, undoubtedly he will be very greatly purified externally. Nārada Muni, therefore, instructed Dhruva Mahārāja to go to the bank of the Yamunā and thus become externally purified. This is part of the gradual process of practicing mystic yoga.

44 प्राणायामेन त्रिवृता प्राणेन्द्रियमनोमलम्
शनैर्व्युदस्याभिध्यायेन्मनसा गुरुणा गुरुम्

prāṇāyāmena tri-vṛtā
prāṇendriya-mano-malam
śanair vyudasyābhidhyāyen
manasā guruṇā gurum

prāṇāyāmena—by breathing exercises; *tri-vṛtā*—by the three recommended ways; *prāṇa-indriya*—the life air and the senses; *manaḥ*—mind; *malam*—impurity; *śanaiḥ*—gradually; *vyudasya*—giving up; *abhidhyāyet*—meditate upon; *manasā*—by the mind; *guruṇā*—undisturbed; *gurum*—the supreme spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa.

After sitting on your seat, practice the three kinds of breathing exercises, and thus gradually control the life air, the mind, and the senses. Completely free yourself from all material contamination, and with great patience begin to meditate on the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

PURPORT: In this verse the entire yoga system is described in summary, and special stress is given to the breathing exercises for stopping the disturbing mind. The mind, by nature, is always oscillating, for it is very fickle, but the breathing exercise is meant to control it. This process of controlling the mind might have been very possible in those days millions of years ago when Dhruva Mahārāja took to it, but at the present moment the mind has to be fixed directly on the lotus feet of the Lord by the chanting process. By chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra one immediately concentrates on the sound vibration and thinks of the lotus feet of the Lord, and very quickly one is elevated to the position of *samādhi,* or trance. If one goes on chanting the holy names of the Lord, which are not different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, naturally his mind becomes absorbed in thought of the Lord.

It is here recommended to Dhruva Mahārāja that he meditate on the supreme guru, or supreme spiritual master. ⑧ The supreme spiritual master is Kṛṣṇa, who is therefore known as *caitya-guru.* This refers to the Supersoul, who is sitting in everyone's heart. He helps from within as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā,* and He sends the spiritual master, who helps from without. The spiritual master is the external manifestation of the *caitya-guru,* or the spiritual master sitting in everyone's heart.

⑨ The process by which we give up our thoughts of material things is called *pratyāhāra,* which entails being freed from all material thoughts and engagements. The word *abhidhyāyet,* which is used in this verse, indicates that unless one's mind is fixed, one cannot meditate. The conclusion, therefore, is that meditation means thinking of the Lord within. Whether one comes to that stage by the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* system or by the method recommended in the *śāstras* especially for this present age—to constantly chant the holy name of the Lord—the goal is to meditate on the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

45 प्रसादाभिमुखं शश्वत्प्रसन्नवदनेक्षणम्
सुनासं सुभ्रुवं चारुकपोलं सुरसुन्दरम्

(8) What is the meaning of *caitya-guru*?
(9) What is the purpose of the yoga practice known as *pratyāhāra*?

prasādābhimukhaṁ śaśvat
prasanna-vadanekṣaṇam
sunāsaṁ subhruvaṁ cāru-
kapolaṁ sura-sundaram

prasāda-abhimukham—always prepared to offer causeless mercy; *śaśvat*—always; *prasanna*—pleasing; *vadana*—mouth; *īkṣaṇam*—vision; *su-nāsam*—very nicely constructed nose; *su-bhruvam*—very nicely decorated eyebrows; *cāru*—beautiful; *kapolam*—forehead; *sura*—the demigods; *sundaram*—good looking.

[The form of the Lord is described herein.] The Lord's face is perpetually very beautiful and pleasing in attitude. To the devotees who see Him, He appears never to be displeased, and He is always prepared to award benedictions to them. His eyes, His nicely decorated eyebrows, His raised nose, and His broad forehead are all very beautiful. He is more beautiful than all the demigods.

PURPORT: This verse clearly explains how one has to meditate on the form of the Lord. Impersonal meditation is a bogus invention of modern days. In none of the Vedic literatures is impersonal meditation recommended. ⑩ In *Bhagavad-gītā,* when meditation is recommended, the word *mat-paraḥ,* which means "pertaining to Me," is used. Any Viṣṇu form pertains to Lord Kṛṣṇa because Lord Kṛṣṇa is the original Viṣṇu form. Sometimes someone tries to meditate upon the impersonal Brahman, which is described in *Bhagavad-gītā* as *avyakta,* meaning "unmanifested" or "impersonal." But it is remarked by the Lord Himself that those who are attached to this impersonal feature of the Lord suffer a very troublesome task because no one can concentrate on the impersonal feature. One has to concentrate on the form of the Lord, which is described here in connection with Dhruva Mahārāja's meditation. As will be apparent from later descriptions, Dhruva Mahārāja perfected this kind of meditation, and his yoga was successful.

46 तरुणं रमणीयाङ्गमरुणोष्ठेक्षणाधरम्
प्रणताश्रयणं नृम्णं शरण्यं करुणार्णवम्

taruṇaṁ ramaṇīyāṅgam
aruṇoṣṭhekṣaṇādharam
praṇatāśrayaṇaṁ nṛmṇaṁ
śaraṇyaṁ karuṇārṇavam

taruṇam—youthful; *ramaṇīya*—attractive; *aṅgam*—all parts of the body; *aruṇa-oṣṭha*—lips pinkish like the rising sun; *īkṣaṇa-adharam*—eyes of the same nature; *praṇata*—one who is surrendered; *āśrayaṇam*—shelter of the surrendered; *nṛmṇam*—transcendentally pleasing in all respects; *śaraṇyam*—the person unto whom it is just worthy to surrender; *karuṇā*—merciful like; *arṇavam*—the ocean.

Nārada Muni continued: The Lord's form is always youthful. Every limb and every part of His body is properly formed, free from defect. His eyes and lips are pinkish like the rising sun. He is always prepared to give shelter to the surrendered soul, and anyone so fortunate as to look upon Him feels all satisfaction. The Lord is always worthy to be the master of the surrendered soul, for He is the ocean of mercy.

PURPORT: Everyone has to surrender to someone superior. That is always the nature of our living condition. At the present moment we are trying to surrender to someone—either to society or to our nation, family, state, or government. ⑪ The surrendering process already exists, but it is never perfect because the person or institution unto whom we surrender is imperfect, and our surrender, having so many ulterior motives, is also imperfect. As such, in the material world no one is worthy to accept anyone's surrender, nor does anyone fully surrender to anyone else unless obliged to do so. But here the surrendering process is voluntary, and the Lord is worthy to accept the surrender. This surrender by the living entity occurs automatically as soon as he sees the beautiful youthful nature of the Lord.

The description given by Nārada Muni is not imaginary. The form of the Lord is understood by the *paramparā* system. Māyāvādī philosophers say that we have to imagine the form of the Lord, but here Nārada Muni does not say that. Rather, he gives the description of the Lord from authoritative sources. ⑫ He is himself an authority, and he is able to go to Vaikuṇṭhaloka and see the Lord personally; therefore his description of the bodily features of the Lord is not imagination. Sometimes we give instructions to our students about the bodily features of the Lord, and they paint Him. Their paintings are not imaginary. The description is given through disciplic succession, just like that given by Nārada Muni, who sees the Lord and describes His bodily features. Therefore, such descriptions should be accepted, and if they are painted, that is not imaginative painting.

47 श्रीवत्साङ्कं घनश्यामं पुरुषं वनमालिनम्
शङ्खचक्रगदापद्मैरभिव्यक्तचतुर्भुजम्

śrīvatsāṅkaṁ ghana-śyāmaṁ
puruṣaṁ vana-mālinam
śaṅkha-cakra-gadā-padmair
abhivyakta-caturbhujam

[*Continued in the next issue.*]

(10) What does *mat-paraḥ* in the *Bhagavad-gītā* mean in the context of meditation?
(11) Why is surrender never perfect in the material world?
(12) Why is Nārada's description of the Lord not imaginary?

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

No Mistakes in Nature

This exchange between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and a disciple named Dr. Thoudam D. Singh (Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodara Swami, at left above) took place in 1973 during a morning walk at Venice Beach in Los Angeles.

Dr. Singh: Now scientists have organized a whole department called gerontology, in which they study how to prolong life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Their real aim should be to stop the suffering. Suppose an old man is in great pain, suffering from many diseases, and suddenly the doctors increase his life span. What is the profit?

Dr. Singh: That is what they do with heart transplants.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is nonsense. Let them stop death; that would be an achievement. Let them stop all disease—ah, that would be an achievement. They cannot do these things. Therefore, all their research is simply a struggle for existence. Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* [15.7], "The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal, fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind."

Student: Now there is a shortage of oil.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, we have built a civilization that is dependent on oil. This is against nature's law, and therefore there is now an oil shortage. By nature's law, winter is now coming. Scientists cannot stop it and turn it into summer. They wrongly think they control nature. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says that the living being thinks himself to be the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by nature. The sun is now rising. Can they make it dark? And when it is dark, can they command the sun, "Get up!"? They do not realize that if they really want to conquer nature, they should try to conquer birth, death, old age, and disease. In *Bhagavad-gītā* [7.14] Kṛṣṇa says, "This divine nature of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it."

Dr. Singh: So, is it very hard to overcome nature's laws?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: For the materialists it is impossible. But if one surrenders to Kṛṣṇa it becomes easy.

Dr. Singh: To explain why there are so many varieties of living entities, the scientists say that at a certain time during evolution, the cells' genes, which normally

Photo by Yamarāja Dāsa

LOUIS VUITTON

HARE KṚṢṆA
HARE KṚṢṆA
KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA
HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA
HARE RĀMA
RĀMA RĀMA
HARE HARE

PRONUNCIATION:
ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes with “drama”)

reproduce themselves perfectly for the next generation, sometimes make a mistake in copying—something like the printing press that sometimes makes mistakes. In some circumstances these mistakes, or mutations, have stood, and different species of living entities have been formed because of the difference in the genes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But that "mistake" has been continuing since time immemorial, for you will find that all varieties of living entities have always existed. Therefore the "mistake" is eternal. But when a "mistake" is permanent, it is not a mistake; it is intelligence.

Dr. Singh: But scientists say that without mutations there would be only one kind of living entity in the whole universe.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. Every living entity has a different mind, and therefore there are so many different species of life to accommodate the different mentalities. For example, we are walking here, but most people are not coming to join us, because they have different mentalities than we do. Why does this difference exist?

Dr. Singh: Maybe it is a mistake.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is not a mistake. It is their desire, and at the time of death everyone will get a body exactly according to his desire. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [18.61], "Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail." What you are thinking of at the time of death exactly determines your next body. Nature will give you the body; the decision is not in your hands, but in nature's, and she is working under the direction of God.

Dr. Singh: But science seems to have evidence that different species of life do arise by mistakes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is their mistake. In the laws of nature there are no mistakes. In railway cars there are first-class, second-class, and third-class sections. If you purchase a third-class ticket but by mistake go to the first-class section, you will not be allowed to stay there. It is not a mistake that there are sections; that is the arrangement. But it is your mistake that you have gone to the wrong section.

So, God is so thorough that He knows all the mistakes that will be made. Therefore, according to the mistakes you commit, you enter a particular body: "Here, come here. The body is ready."

There are 8,400,000 species of life, and nature works, assigning different bodies, with mathematical precision. When the government builds a city, it builds a prison even before the city is complete, because the government knows that there will be many criminals who will have to go to prison. This is not the government's mistake; it is the criminals'. Because they become criminals, they have to go there. It is their mistake.

In nature there are no mistakes. Kṛṣṇa says, "This material nature is working under My direction, O son of Kuntī, and producing all moving and nonmoving beings." [Bg. 9.10] Nature works under the supervision of God, Kṛṣṇa, so how can nature make mistakes? But we commit mistakes, we are in illusion, our senses are imperfect, and we cheat. That is the difference between God and man. God does not have imperfect senses; His senses are perfect.

Dr. Wolf-Rottkay: Because our senses are defective, the technological enlargements of our senses, like microscopes and telescopes, must also be defective.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Material existence means defective existence. If you construct something with defective knowledge and imperfect senses, whatever you construct must be defective. Therefore we conclude that whatever the scientists say is defective.

Dr. Singh: But they seem quite satisfied.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The ass is also satisfied to carry the load of the washerman. In some parts of India one may sometimes see a dog starving to death. But as soon as it gets a female dog, it is satisfied with having sex. Is that satisfaction? The dog is starving, but still it is satisfied with sex. Everyone is satisfied, even the worm in the stool. That is nature's law.

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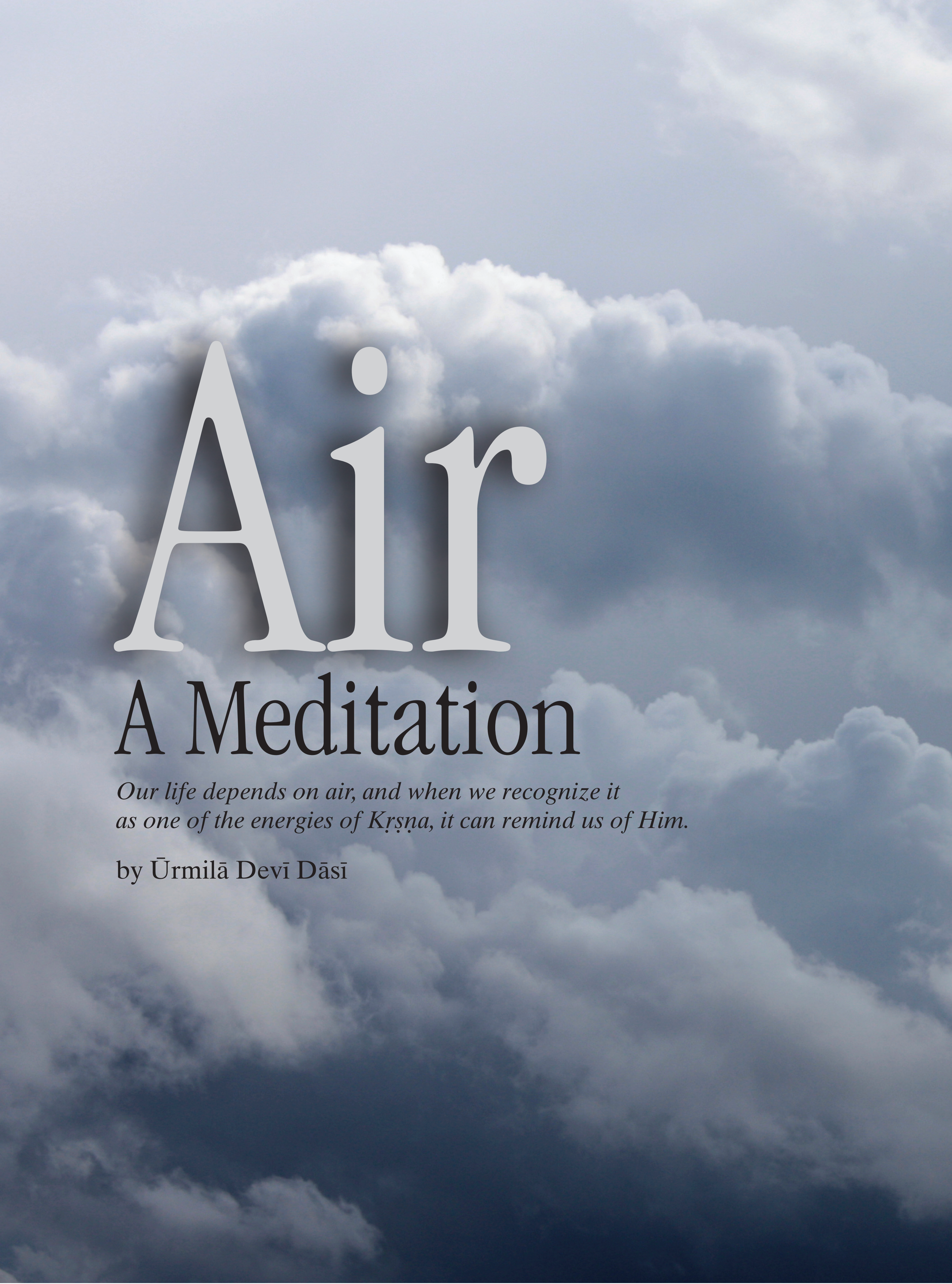


Air

A Meditation

Our life depends on air, and when we recognize it as one of the energies of Kṛṣṇa, it can remind us of Him.

by Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī

Cloud background: © Andrea Krause | iStockphoto. Kṛṣṇa: detail from a painting by Yadurāṇī Devi Dāsī. Montage: Yamarāja Dāsa

SWEAT GATHERS on my lower back, and my clothes stick to my skin. Then the leaves of nearby trees shiver to announce the coming relief of a breeze. I consider how the air I'm perceiving outside me also moves within me, and I think of how air carries smells, fills our lungs, nourishes our cells, flies our kites and airplanes, and presses with strong but unperceived force on our skin.

Thinking about air can easily remind us of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord. Air is one of the Lord's energies, as listed in scriptures such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Brahma-saṁhitā.* When Arjuna sees Kṛṣṇa's universal form, he says, "You are air, fire, and water!" Kṛṣṇa eternally exists as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, separate from His energies, but those energies, Vaiṣṇava philosophers explain, should be considered identical with Kṛṣṇa Himself. Any of His energies, therefore, can be an impetus for *bhakti-yoga*—uniting with Him through devotional service.

The qualities of air can remind us of the Lord's personal qualities. Some philosophers conclude that God is without qualities—a formless, merely existent energy. Since God is complete, however, He must have a personality with qualities. Since He is the source of everything, everything must exist in Him in some way. Since we, God's creation, have attributes, it is reasonable to conclude that our source also has qualities.

One of the most obvious qualities of the air is its subtlety. Although air is all around us, pushing on our body with a pressure of fifteen pounds per square inch (one kilogram per square centimeter), we are practically oblivious of it. We usually breathe unconsciously too, so subtle is the air moving in and out of our lungs. We see air only through its effects, such as when it moves branches and straw or carries smoke and water vapor.

Kṛṣṇa too is almost imperceptible to a materially conditioned soul, visible only by His effects. We see His handiwork in a flower's beauty or the predictability of the planets' movements, but we do not see Him. The natural laws on which we base our math and science imply a lawmaker. But much of the nature of that lawmaker stays unknown.

Subtle air can move things that to our senses are far more substantial than air. Violent air in tornados and other storms can throw buildings afar and push wood splinters into metal. Similarly, with only the indiscernible movement of His will, Kṛṣṇa can move, shape, change, and scatter everything we can perceive.

On the spiritual plane, the gentle gust of a whisper of His name, heard or spoken with merely a shadow of affection for Him, can move Him to dismantle a steel-framed heart, turning anger and lust into spiritual love.

Kṛṣṇa and Air Everywhere

In our experience, air is everywhere, as is Kṛṣṇa. And just as air carries other substances without mixing with them, so Kṛṣṇa stays aloof and unaffected even though He is in the heart of every living being and within every atom. Air carries heavenly fragrances from flower gardens and putrid smells from rubbish heaps, but the air is neutral. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa responds to our desires and actions yet remains unattached. If we act in violent and rancid ways, He carries us to lower planets. If we act in pious and fragrant ways, He carries us to heaven.

> ***The air the Lord breathes from His divine nostrils is the sweet sounds of Vedic wisdom.***

Air is the element we can do without for the shortest period. Our other bodily needs— water, food, shelter, warmth—have no value if we have no air. We certainly cannot think of meeting our social, mental, emotional, and intellectual needs without a constant supply of air.

Similarly, our relationship with Kṛṣṇa is our primary need. Without a conscious, deliberate, and loving relationship with the Lord, nothing else gives us full satisfaction. How can we enjoy a delicious meal in the company of loving friends if we're suffocating? Persons who entirely neglect their relationship with God, or put that relationship as anything but a top priority, find that the good and pleasurable things in their lives fail to give them the satisfaction they expect. While such people often try to adjust what and how they enjoy, they rarely consider that the real solution is as basic as breathing.

Furthermore, because Kṛṣṇa is complete, making one's relationship with Him the top priority brings automatic satisfaction of all other needs. One can then deal with the world from a position of inner peace and joy. A person in such a position has complete freedom, not dependent on anyone or anything for satisfaction.

Air provides oxygen for our digestion, bringing nourishment and health to our cells. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* that He joins with the outgoing and incoming air of life to digest our food. For souls who have fully given themselves to Him with love, He delivers all they need while maintaining what they have. He supplies the necessities for all others too, giving food and shelter even to lowly and poisonous creatures.

The movement of air seems to make plants and trees dance and forms attractive patterns in water and sand. Blowing air sculpts rock into works of art. We are reminded that Kṛṣṇa's movements are as graceful as a dance and that He likes to dress as if He is a dancing actor about to go on stage. His dancing with His pure devotees in the spiritual world is perfectly choreographed—more graceful, soothing, complex, exciting, and intricate than the swirling waves of a stream whipped by the wind.

Air in Kṛṣṇa's Activities

In His form as Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa rides through the air standing on the back of the giant eagle Garuḍa. From there, He sometimes fights battles with demons, such as those in the great cosmic fight for a jug of nectar.

To create the material world, Kṛṣṇa expands Himself into the gigantic form of Mahā-Viṣṇu, resting on the causal ocean. As the Lord breathes out, universes come from Him and gradually expand. When He breathes in, the universes gradually reenter His transcendent form. We are presently living in one of those universes, riding on the Lord's breath.

When increasing materialism periodically covers spiritual knowledge, Kṛṣṇa comes in various incarnations to set things right. One incarnation, Hayagrīva, is a golden humanlike form with the head of a horse. The air He breathes from His divine nostrils is the sweet sounds of Vedic wisdom, given to Brahmā, the first created being in the universe. Because any of Kṛṣṇa's senses can perform the action of any other sense, He can sing sweetly with puffs of air from His nose.

At the beginning of the universe, Brahmā searched for knowledge of himself, his duty, and the nature of the cosmos. After meditating for thousands of years, he heard Kṛṣṇa breathe in his heart. Kṛṣṇa's breath had flowed through His flute and transformed into the Gāyatrī mantra, which then came out of Brahmā's mouth as Vedic knowledge.

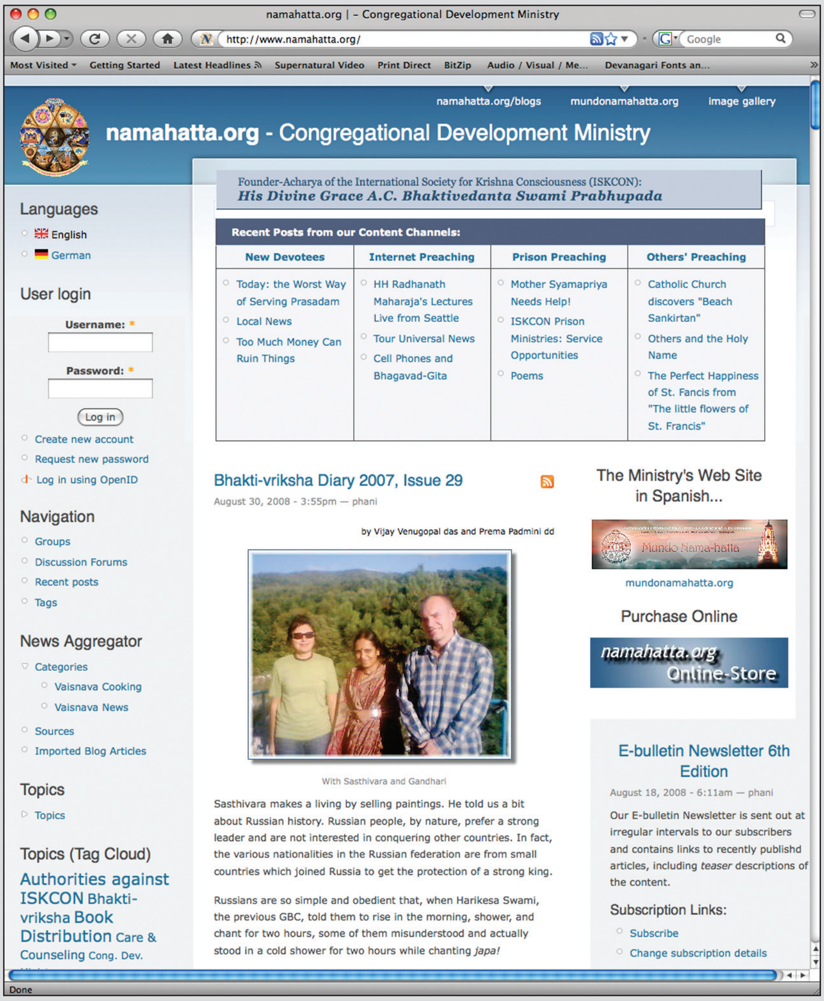
Everything in the spiritual world is conscious, including Lord Kṛṣṇa's flute, His constant companion and intimate devotee. Kṛṣṇa blows on His flute to herd His cows. The music bewilders even expert musicians on heavenly planets and induces a contrary nature—rivers flow backward, rocks melt, while animals and people become stunned in ecstasy. The great devotee Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, the father of Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master, wrote in *Gītāvalī* that Kṛṣṇa abducts the mind of His devotees with the enchanting songs of His flute as well by His sweet bodily fragrance, which are both blowing in relentless waves upon the wind.

Many people ask how they can absorb their minds and hearts in the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, while being busy in the world. Family, work, studies—all seem to distract from the spiritual. But spiritual life can be as close as our every breath of air.

Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī, a BTG associate editor, has a Ph.D. in educational leadership from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. She is working on international curriculum projects for primary and secondary education in ISKCON.

e-Krishna

Profiles of Kṛṣṇa-related websites



namahatta.org - Congregational Development Ministry

Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON):
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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Bhakti-vriksha Diary 2007, Issue 29

August 30, 2008 - 3:55pm — phani

by Vijay Venugopal das and Prema Padmini dd

With Sasthivara and Gandhari

Sasthivara makes a living by selling paintings. He told us a bit about Russian history. Russian people, by nature, prefer a strong leader and are not interested in conquering other countries. In fact, the various nationalities in the Russian federation are from small countries which joined Russia to get the protection of a strong king.

Russians are so simple and obedient that, when Harikesa Swami, the previous GBC, told them to rise in the morning, shower, and chant for two hours, some of them misunderstood and actually stood in a cold shower for two hours while chanting *japa!*

The Ministry's Web Site in Spanish...

mundonamahatta.org

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E-bulletin Newsletter 6th Edition

August 18, 2008 - 6:11am — phani

Our E-bulletin Newsletter is sent out at irregular intervals to our subscribers and contains links to recently publishd articles, including *teaser* descriptions of the content.

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www.namahatta.org—This is the official website of ISKCON's Congregational Development Ministry. Phaṇīśvara Dāsa maintains the website from his home in Sri Mayapur, West Bengal, India.

"The electricity connection is sometimes a problem" he says, "but Mayapur's the best place on earth."

The site focuses on information about the Ministry's programs and activities, particularly about community development.

"We offer resources like the *Bhakti-vriksha Manual* and other publications, not only from our Ministry but from other sources and authors as well."

You can access online documents and free downloads or buy printed copies from the online store. You can also subscribe to an email newsletter.

"Our E-bulletin newsletter contains links to recently published articles," Phaṇīśvara says.

Namahatta.org was originally registered in 2002. It started as a simple page containing the ministry's mission statement and some basic information. In 2005 Phaṇīśvara was asked to help develop the website.

"I agreed," he says, "even though I had only a little experience with web publishing. Learning things on the way, I went through a couple of website hosting services and website content-management systems until I arrived at the present solution. I use Drupal, an open-source content-management system that can be modified to do practically anything anyone could want from a website.

"The site has separate content channels to present the broad spectrum of news and resources in a way that makes it easy for readers to find what they're looking for."

Namahatta.org is a work in progress.

"There are several things I haven't had time to try out yet," Phaṇīśvara says. "I greatly appreciate input from readers, including suggestions for new content."

ISKCON Prison Ministry

At Namahatta.org you'll also find the website of the ISKCON Prison Ministry (IPM), whose mission is "To spread Lord Caitanya's mercy to the fallen souls of Kali-yuga who find themselves within a prison of the prison house of the material world."

The Prison Ministry works to bring Kṛṣṇa consciousness to prisons around the world, to provide opportunities for inmates to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and to guide inmates in their spiritual life.

On the IPM channel at Namhatta.org you'll find news, stories, and contact details. You can also learn how you can help by writing, volunteering, and donating books or *Back to Godhead* magazines.

Divine Desire Fulfilled

On the first anniversary of the installation of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma at ISKCON Punjabi Bagh, a temple member recalls the spirit of cooperation behind the fulfillment of Prabhupāda's desire.

by Rādhikā Kṛpā Devī Dāsī

The entrance to the ISKCON Punjabi Bagh temple (left), where devotees serve the deities (below) Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma; Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā; and Rādhikā-Ramaṇa.

"HARIBOL! Hurry up! We're getting late!"

My husband was yelling at me at the top of his voice. We had an appointment to keep, but I was taking longer than usual. My hesitation and awkwardness were evident. We were going to meet a rich man to beg alms to help us in relocating our temple, and we'd never done anything like this before.

ISKCON Punjabi Bagh (Delhi) was in a crisis, and all of us—a handful of resident and congregation devotees—accepted the responsibility of steering out of it. Our beloved deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhikā-Ramaṇa and Śrī Śrī Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā had been residing in the same building for eighteen years, but now the owner of the property had sent a legal notice asking Them to leave. Bewildered, we had to look for another place. We definitely wanted a bigger and better building because the congregation was growing, thanks to the temple's commitment to outreach programs.

To look for a place befitting Their Lordships in this posh suburb was an immense task. But the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, answered our sincere prayers, dispelling all fears. My husband, Rāsapriyā Dāsa, a real estate agent, found a big building on a prime road. Without much hassle, city authorities approved the purchase. But where would the money come from? We needed huge amount in a very short time.

Inspired by our spiritual master, His Holiness Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, and committed to serving Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission, my husband and I undertook to collect an amount that seemed huge to us. All the devotees, irrespective of their *varṇa* or *āśrama,* put their heads and hearts together to secure the payment for the new temple.

How could the Lord not help us? We were determined to install the deities in the palace of our dreams. With sheer enthusiasm devotees raised money through the life mem-

Temple guests (left) listen attentively to a discourse on Bhagavad-gītā *given by Nityadhāma Dāsa. Below, devotees chant on beads during morning services.*

bership program, book distribution, and donations. A "New Temple Project Team" was formed under the chairmanship of Vedavyāsa Dāsa, who encouraged all the members to forge ahead, while he accepted the responsibility of procuring a major share of the donations. Thus his managerial skills and Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami's blessings led to the achievement of our goal.

The Lord rewarded our sincere efforts, and we were successful in getting the new place registered in ISKCON's name within the stipulated time. ISKCON Punjabi Bagh's growth from a tiny outpost to a huge temple is a living example of the devotees' vigor and enthusiasm.

Prabhupāda's Desire

"I wish to construct a grand temple of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma. . . The residents of New Delhi will be very much encouraged to visit. . . . That is my ambition." (Śrīla Prabhupāda, letter to Tejiyās Dāsa, then temple president, New Delhi, 1975)

Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja often quoted these lines when he talked about installing Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma deities in a big temple in Delhi. As we were successful in acquiring a big place, he wanted us now to welcome the divine cowherd boys too. Under his guidance and blessings, the entire congregation and all the temple devotees worked hard in the fruition of this holy seed planted by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

After thirty-two years Prabhupāda's divine desire bore fruit, bringing joy to the devotees' hearts. The magnificent, enchanting cowherd boys Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma arrived at Punjabi Bagh (one of ISKCON's leading centers in India) on the

The New Temple

THE NEW Punjabi Bagh temple looks like a grand palace, showcasing the skills of craftsmen from neighboring states. For example, artisans from Rajasthan carved the beautiful *jarokhas* (traditional windows) and engraved flowers and leaves on the roof, walls, and pillars. Everything is painted exquisitely in vibrant colors, the matt finish giving the temple a bright but subtle look.

Russian artist Añjana Dāsa brought inside walls to life with original paintings of Lord Veṅkaṭeśvara, Śrī Nṛsiṁhadeva, and Dāmodara-līlā. The royal golden *siṁhāsana* (throne) for Rādhikā-Ramaṇa and Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma was built in Ahmedabad, a city renowned for handmade wooden artifacts. The grand crystal chandelier fills the 2,200-square-foot temple hall with yellow light, adding to the Their Lordship's radiance. The beautiful modern tiled flooring, the state-of-the-art sound system, and the air conditioning make the temple the perfect place to absorb oneself in hearing, speaking, and singing about Kṛṣṇa.

The majestic entrance resembles the gate of a fort, with dioramas of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes adorning its two sides. In the massive courtyard the royal eagle Garuḍa faces the deities with folded hands. Nestled in the corner of the courtyard is a lotus-shaped fountain, its beautiful mosaic work depicting colorful fishes that give pleasure to Their Lordships. Rāma Dāsa, from Kenya, dedicated his time to supervising this project.

Prabala Dāsa (below) offers respects to Garuḍa, the carrier of the Lord, who views the deities from his place of honor at the rear of the temple. At right, a bas-relief of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma adorns a temple wall.

auspicious occasion of Rādhāṣṭamī (September 20, 2007).

A four-day festival led up to the main installation ceremony. All around Delhi huge billboards with pictures of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma advertised Their divine arrival. With deep faith and conviction, hundreds of devotees took part in the traditional *yajñas* and *pūjās*, and eight thousand people witnessed the installation.

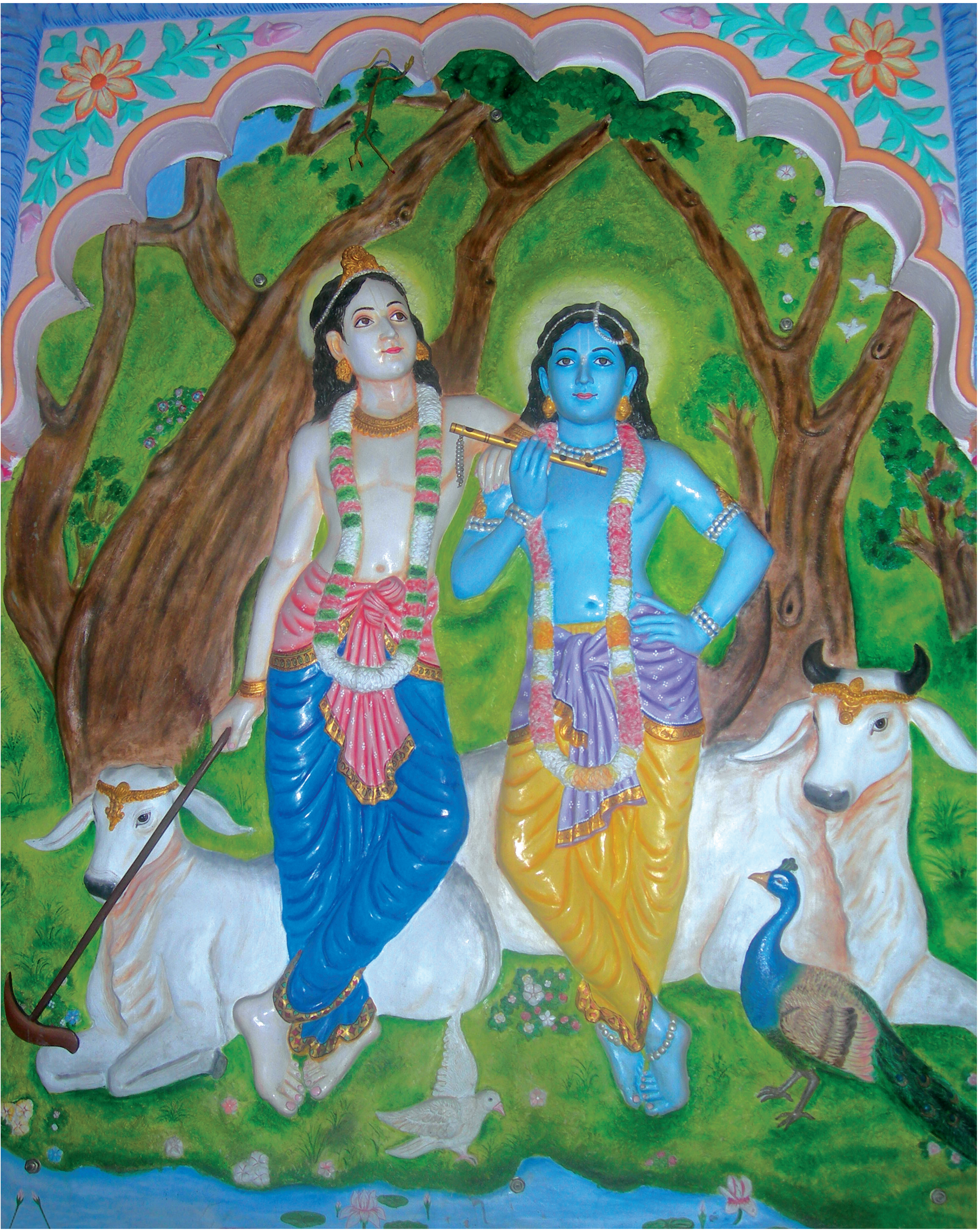
Temple Activities

The Śrī Śrī Rādhikā-Ramaṇa Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Temple and Vedic Education Centre is playing a vital role in propagating Vedic knowledge. Under the leadership of co-president (with Varāha Dāsa) Rukmiṇī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, the ISKCON Youth Forum (IYF) is making news in North India with its audiovisual programs in schools, colleges, and universities. Young devotees are also the backbone of a vibrant book-distribution program, which in 2006 ranked third in all of ISKCON, with 2.25 million books sold.

The temple's thirty-plus Bhakti-Vriksha and Nama Hatta programs are popular with congregation members in and around Punjabi Bagh. The temple also conducts a bimonthly program for the inmates of Delhi Prison.

We devotees at ISKCON Punjabi Bagh are happy that Prabhupāda's desire for Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma deities in Delhi has been fulfilled. And we pray that he may bless us to carry out more of his plans to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this important city. ❀

Rādhikā Kṛpā Devī Dāsī, a disciple of His Holiness Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, is a fashion designer who designs and sells Indian dresses. She also designs outfits for ISKCON deities and regularly travels and gives talks on Kṛṣṇa consciousness.



Is Duty a FOUR-LETTER WORD?

The ideas of the Western philosopher Kant come close to the concept of dharma.

by Satyarāja Dāsa

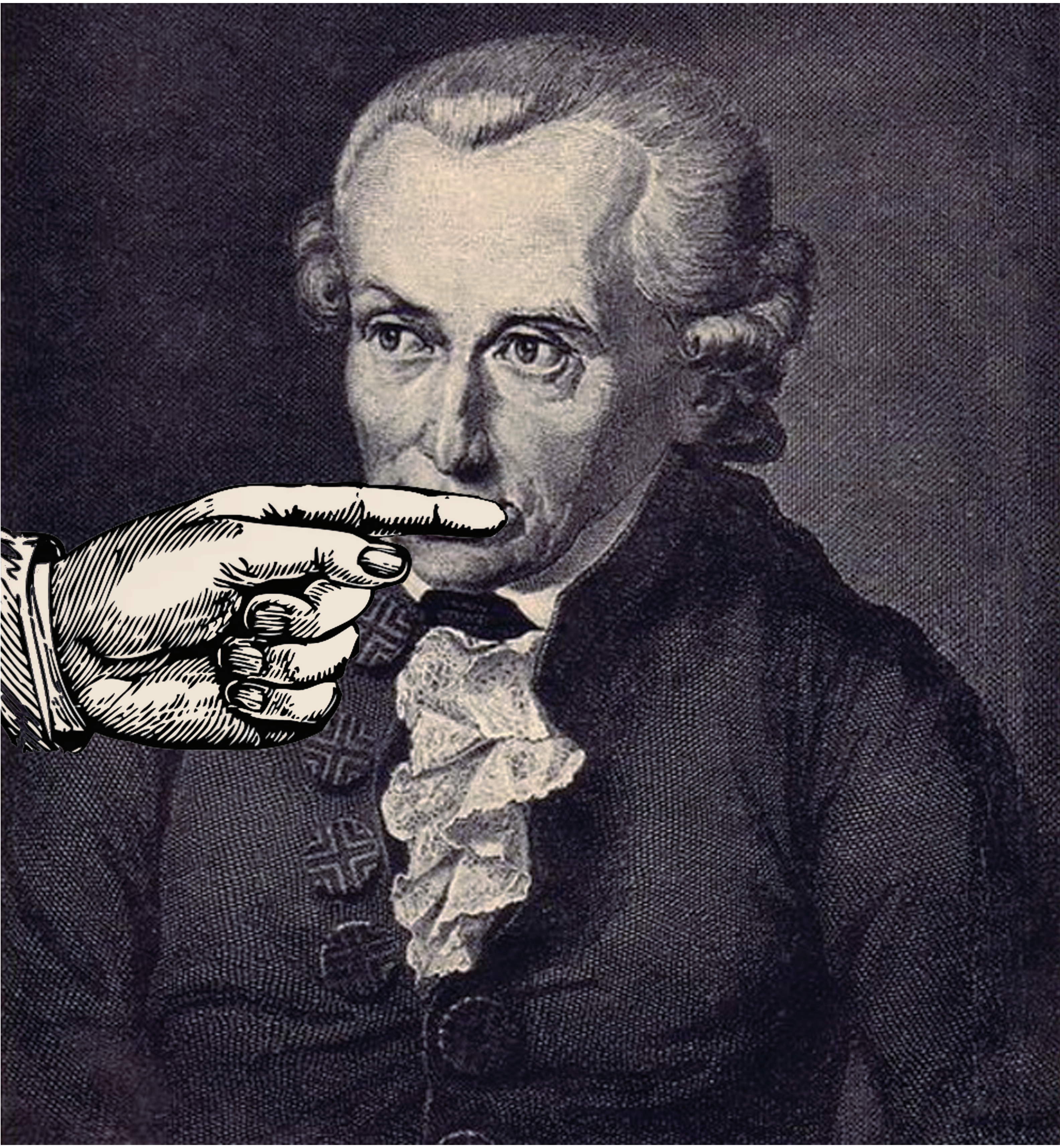
FOR SOME, DUTY IS A dirty word—we want to do what we want to do. Period. To hell with duty. But let's consider this more seriously: What is duty, and should I be concerned about it? Clearly, duty means different things to different people. And yet it's not uncommon to wonder: What am I meant to do? Is there a reason I was put on this earth?

Duty is a term loosely applied to any action or course of action regarded as morally necessary, apart from personal likes and dislikes. From the theistic viewpoint, the ultimate duty is to God and our fellow man.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was among the West's many philosophers who wrote about duty. He called his system of thought "deontology," which literally means "the study of duty." One of the most important implications of deontology is that a person's behavior can be wrong even if it results in a positive outcome, and an act can be virtuous even if it results in a negative outcome. In contrast to consequentialism, a philosophy claiming "the ends justify the means," deontology insists that *how* people achieve their goals is generally just as important as *what* those goals are.

In deontological moral systems, we have to understand what our moral duties are and what rules tend to regulate those duties. When we follow our duty, then, we are behaving morally. When we do not, we are behaving immorally. Usually, Kant admits, our duties, rules, and obligations are determined by God. Being moral is thus a matter of obeying God's laws, though in some cases people will have an inborn sense of right and wrong independent of belief in God.

These ideas correspond to the concept of dharma, which also focuses on various kinds of duty. The Vedic literature tells us that we have two kinds of God-given duty: temporary duties related to the body (*varṇāśrama-dharma*), and eternal duties coming from our inborn nature as eternal spirit souls (*sanātana-dharma*). In *bhakti-yoga,* duty is the chief characteristic and underlying motivation in *vaidhi-bhakti,* or regulated devotion to the Supreme Lord. Properly executed, *vaidhi-bhakti* leads to perfection in regulated devotional service and can also lead to *rāgānuga-bhakti,* or spontaneous devotion, which sets duty aside and revels in spontaneous love of God. Thus, dharma—or in Western terms,



Immanuel Kant's philosophy is called deontology, or "the study of duty," a topic many people would prefer to avoid.

deontological practice—can lead to the ultimate goal of life.

What Exactly Is Dharma?

The word *dharma* comes from the Sanskrit root *dhri*, meaning "to support, hold up, or bear." In common parlance dharma means faith, duty, divine law, the right way of living, or the path of righteousness, definitions with which Kant would be happy. But there's more to it than that. The derivative *dhru*, or *dhruva*, meaning "pole," implies the balancing of extremes through an axis. Dharma thus refers to that invariable something at the center of existence that regulates change by not participating in it, by remaining constant. Ultimately, dharma is the central organizing principle of the cosmos; it supports and maintains all existence.

While the word *dharma* is sometimes translated as "religion," Prabhupāda pointed out the mistake in that translation. "Religion" implies a person's faith, which may change, but dharma is the inner reality that makes a thing what it is. It is the dharma of the bee to make honey, of the cow to give milk, of the sun to shine, and of the river to flow. Dharma is a thing's essence.

The original social system as enunciated in the Bhagavad-gītā is intended for everyone . . . it bears naturally on everyone's life.

Varṇāśrama Dharma

While every living being's *sanātana-dharma* ("eternal duty") is service to God, in the material world such service plays out in a variety of ways according to each person's psychophysical makeup. This is called *sva-dharma*, or one's personal duty based on idiosyncratic inclination and body type. It is also called *varṇāśrama-dharma.*

The most well-known articulation of the *varṇāśrama* system (or at least the *varṇa,* or social duty, part of it) is found in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.13). Here, Lord Kṛṣṇa says that He created human society with four natural social classes, or *varṇas*. He further explains that the specific religious duties prescribed for each social division allow for the most effective application of eternal religious principles in the material world.

The social orders are (1) *brāhmaṇas:* intellectuals and priests; (2) *kṣatriyas:* politicians, administrators, and warriors; (3) *vaiśyas:* farmers, merchants, and bankers; and (4) *śūdras:* laborers and artisans. People naturally fit into one of these occupational divisions, says Lord Kṛṣṇa, in line with their qualifications and work. It should be emphasized that the original system was based on vocational aptitude and inclination, not on birth.

What we are talking about here are personality types. The *brāhmaṇa,* for example, has a priestly nature, contemplative and inclined toward study. He responds to goodness and is gentle and clean. His vision focuses upward, toward higher reality. The *kṣatriya,* on the other hand, is the chivalrous, knightly type, and his concerns are generally more "this-worldly" than those of the *brāhmaṇa.* He leans toward action, and his powers of analysis are keen. He is characteristically noble, except when his passions get the better of him. His main focus is on getting things done, but with honor, virtue, and integrity.

Now, the *vaiśya,* for his part, tends to be bound to material values because his life revolves around money. His motivation is security, prosperity, and economic stability, and it is difficult for him to see beyond these.

If the *vaiśya's* vision is somewhat limited, the *śūdra's* is still more compromised. He feels good only when he works hard at physical labor. He is a born assistant, not usually prone to original ideas. His life revolves around his physical work and immediate bodily pleasures, and he prefers routine to innovative thinking.

As should by now be apparent, these classifications apply to all human beings, not just to Hindus. Everyone has a natural inclination toward a particular kind of endeavor. And all endeavors fit into one of these four broad categories. Thus, the original social system as enunciated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* is intended for everyone, or at the very least it bears naturally on everyone's life. It is thus a component of *sanātana-dharma,* or the eternal occupation of every soul.

The *āśramas,* or the second part of the *varṇāśrama* system, represent a four-tiered system of spirituality in which one is first a student (*brahmacārī*), then gets married (*gṛhastha*), and eventually retires (*vānaprastha*) and renounces everything (*sannyāsa*) in preparation for death. In many ways these may not sound like spiritual stations as such. Rather, they might seem like ordinary phases of life, playing out according to the passage of time, and indeed they are. Like the social orders enunciated by Kṛṣṇa, the four spiritual orders can be found, to one degree or another, in diverse human cultures throughout the world. In all civilizations there are celibate religious people, married people who want to pursue higher spiritual values, people coming to grips with old age and the importance of renunciation, and people recognizing the inevitability of death, vowing to devote the remainder of their days to pursuing God consciousness and sharing it with others.

What is unique about the Vedic scriptures and their corollaries, however, is that here one finds guidance and models of behavior appropriate to each of the four *āśramas,* and these help one to evolve spiritually. One's progress on the spiritual path can be tested by distinct behavioral patterns that reflect various levels of consciousness, and these too are outlined in the scriptures. Thus, while the basic form of *varṇāśrama* exists worldwide, Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees teach that the system as conveyed in Vedic literature presents a structured method to achieve spiritual perfection.

Sanātana-Dharma

As I mentioned before, dharma refers to that activity or function that cannot be changed. Heat and light, for example, are the dharma of fire; without heat and light, fire has no meaning. The dharma of the soul is to serve God. More specifically, that is our *sanātana-dharma,* or our eternal function irrespective of what body we may inhabit. In material consciousness we lose sight of our natural *sanātana-dharma* and become engaged in unnatural activity related to the body. Our original spiritual nature as a soul becomes dormant, temporarily replaced with a distorted nature, that of identifying with the body and its pains and pleasures. *Sanātana-dharma* is resumed only when the soul is placed in proximity to the spiritual element, such as God Himself (through prayer, chanting, deity worship, and so on), scripture, and pure devotees of the Lord.

Through such association, the true nature of the soul again becomes established, just as ice returns to its natural state as liquid when exposed to the gentle rays of the sun. This is Kṛṣṇa conscious spirituality, whether one refers to it as Vaiṣṇavism, as has been done for millennia in India, or by its more general name of *sanātana-dharma.*

Dharma: The Word's Vedic Roots

THE WORD *dharma* is traceable to the Vedic term *ṛtam,* from which we get our English word *right* (in the sense of "correct"). In the original *Vedas* we are taught to act in accord with universal laws, and such actions are considered the right thing to do. *Ṛtam* also gives us the English word *ritual,* which when properly executed was meant to bring us closer to ultimate reality.

Acts the *Vedas* consider sinful run counter to *ṛtam.* In Sanskrit many of them begin with the letter "m." For example, eating fish (*matsya*), eating meat (*māṁsa*), drinking wine (*madya*), eating unsanctified grains (*mudrā*), and having unregulated sex (*maithuna*). According to Vedic sages the improper use of these "m's" leads to the bodily conception of life, culminating in death. The sages of old, engaging a literary symbolism, say that for those given to such improper behavior, an "m" may be placed in front of the word *ṛtam,* making it *mṛtam:* death. Clearly, Vedic sages were advocates of doing things the right way, the way of one's dharma.

Back to Kant

What would Kant say about all this? Well, as a Christian, he appreciated theological perspectives, and he tried to harmonize reason with belief in God. But Kant was big on what he called the "Categorical Imperative," or universal truths that can be logically substantiated. It's sort of a preliminary version of *sanātana-dharma*.

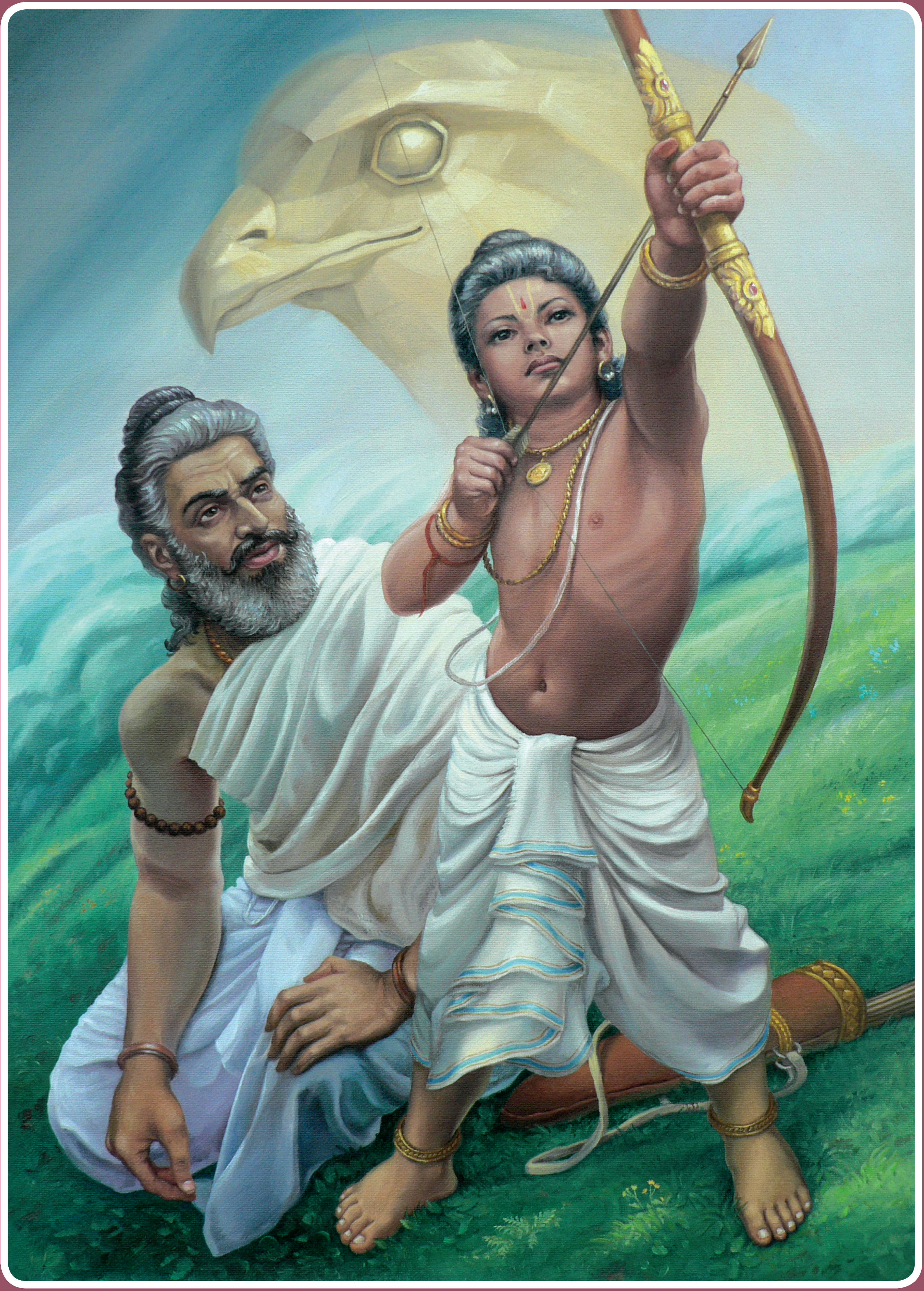
Additionally, or as part of the Categorical Imperative, he wanted his readers to ask themselves the following question: "Could I accept a world in which everyone behaves as I do?" According to Kant, this question should guide our sense of morals and ethics. In other words, if I act inappropriately, selfishly, my behavior infringes on the rights and liberties of others. Similarly, if I act selflessly, considering other people and the natural world around me, that serves the greater good; that is in everyone's better interest.

As devotees of Kṛṣṇa, we see good reasoning in Kant's basic hypothesis: We recognize the benefits of a selfless life of God consciousness. If people would chant the names of God and refrain from meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling, the world would be a better place. If everyone accepted the nonsectarian principles of universal religion, *sanātana-dharma,* there would be no "us and them," no religious wars, no bickering based on identifying the body as the self.

Generally, the material world is the place where people act selfishly, focused on their own pleasure, creating an unworkable situation. A world in which we act as independent enjoyers, divorced from God, becomes a place of havoc. If the goal of life is unbridled pleasure, neighbors become commodities, valuable only as long as they bring us enjoyment.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness says that the true Categorical Imperative is service to God. Whether we serve Him in an overarching, general way, in line with *sanātana-dharma,* or engage our predilections, as in the *varṇāśrama* system, service to God is a must. It is the essence of dharma and the highest duty. Indeed, this is a truth that Kant would never deny. ❀

Satyarāja Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is a BTG associate editor. He has written over twenty books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness and lives near New York City.



Painting by Dina Bandhu Dāsa

Taking Aim at the SUPREME TARGET

Pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate goal of spiritual life, and also the means to achieve it.

by Mohinī Rādhā Devī Dāsī

"WHAT DO YOU SEE?" the sage Droṇa asked his young students one after another.

The *Mahābhārata* describes an episode when Droṇācārya tested his students, who included the hundred sons of Gāndhārī and the five Pāṇḍavas. To assess their mastery of fighting skills, Droṇācārya tied a wooden bird to the top of a tree and asked each prince to prepare to shoot it down. As they took aim, Droṇācārya asked them to describe what they saw.

Most of the princes broadly depicted what they saw, and included the garden, the tree, flowers, the sky, the branch from which the bird was suspended, and the bird itself. Guru Droṇācārya then asked them to step aside and asked Arjuna to come forward. Arjuna said that he could see only the bird's eye.

"A warrior should see only his target," Droṇa told his students.

Without waiting for Arjuna to shoot, Droṇācārya was satisfied not only that Arjuna was his favorite student, but also that he would grow to become worthy of being called the best archer in the world. Arjuna demonstrated his greatness simply by having the proper focus.

Droṇācārya's lesson emphasized the correct approach, a topic that has larger implications. Arjuna's singular focus enabled him to achieve mastery of archery, as described throughout the *Mahābhārata*. If read metaphorically, however, this unswerving focus can apply to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, in which Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate goal. Devotional service, or *bhakti-yoga*, focuses the body, mind, and senses exclusively on Kṛṣṇa. Instead of aiming arrows at a clay or wooden target, our daily practice trains us to cultivate loving devotion for Kṛṣṇa and to direct our activities for His pleasure.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa explains the science of *bhakti-yoga*, and even the context of the

The teacher Droṇācārya studies his student Arjuna, whose aim is fixed on the eye of his target.

conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna aligns with the theme of unswerving focus. Arjuna is forced to confront all his doubts, both spiritual (in the conversation with Kṛṣṇa) and practical (in terms of the larger narrative of the *Mahābhārata*) and focus on his goal and how to achieve it. His questions to Kṛṣṇa become more and more focused on achieving a higher understanding and realization. The conversation takes place in the center of the battlefield, which can represent physical and emotional challenges from many directions. Arjuna is called to rise above his emotional attachment for his teacher, grandfather, and relatives, who face him across the battlefield. As Arjuna gains spiritual knowledge from Kṛṣṇa, he rises above these attachments, sees Kṛṣṇa consciousness as the true goal, and promises to act in *bhakti-yoga.*

In spiritual life, the highest profession is to be the humble servant of the servant of the Lord.

Arjuna's position symbolically reflects the state of the conditioned soul—constantly embroiled in a struggle with material nature and tempted on all sides by allurements. Kṛṣṇa tells him to simply perform his duty for His sake, without being attached to the results of his actions.

Kṛṣṇa is calling us to do the same. The essence of devotional life is to focus on the Lord, dedicating everything to His pleasure. The living entity's natural tendency is to love and be loved, but generally this propensity is misdirected toward objects of temporary sense enjoyment. Since the living entities are part of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, knowledge means recognizing that eternal relationship and acting in consciousness of it. When Kṛṣṇa becomes the center of our existence, pure love develops and culminates in exclusive surrender unto Him.

Kṛṣṇa wants our surrender, and reciprocates with us according to our degree of submission. One way He does so is by giving the understanding by which to return to Him to "those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 10.10)

The Means and the Goal

We can thus understand that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not only the goal but also the means to achieve it: Constant remembrance of Kṛṣṇa and dedicated service to Him and His devotees purify the conditioned soul. The soul loses attraction to the temporary material world, which binds by its illusion. By always remembering Kṛṣṇa, one can transcend the clutches of karmic reaction and the endless cycle of birth, death, old age, and disease. On attaining Kṛṣṇa's abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana, one never has to return to the material realm.

Devotional service is also the way to achieve steadfastness in devotional service. Practicing devotional service requires attention and care in avoiding offenses, just as a gardener protects growing plants by removing weeds. By regular and attentive practice, devotional service gives rise to more devotional service. Śrīla Prabhupāda has taught that chanting of Kṛṣṇa's names in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* means to beg the Lord to be engaged in devotional service. In spiritual life, the highest profession is to be the humble servant of the servant of the Lord.

The dictionary defines *goal* as the object to which our efforts or ambitions are directed. *Goal* also refers to the destination of a journey, and an obscure definition links it to archery as the "mark aimed at." These definitions capture the essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: Kṛṣṇa (including His name, form, pastimes, paraphernalia, and associates) is the goal of all activities. Kṛṣṇa is, in fact, the *ultimate goal*, which means that He is the goal of goals. If we stay focused on Him, He is sure to help us move closer to Him and achieve our natural position: a pure, loving relationship with Him in the ever-blissful spiritual realm.

Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed the importance of keeping Kṛṣṇa at the forefront of the mind, which he said can be "easily trained" if fixed on Kṛṣṇa. He compares the Kṛṣṇa conscious mind to a fortress protected by a skillful general. If we focus on Kṛṣṇa, He will protect our mind from the enemies of lust, greed, and anger, and we will eventually rise to the platform of pure devotional service. With a singular and fixed goal, the path is clear and direct. This is confirmed in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.14), which recommends that we constantly hear and glorify the Lord "with one-pointed attention."

One-pointed attention means that body, mind, and words must be directed to the same goal, just as musical notes must be played in the same key to produce a harmonious sound. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, "Devotees must live thoroughly honest lives in all respects by their body, mind, and words. These are the simple methods of culturing spiritual realization to its zenith." (From *In Search of the Ultimate Goal of Life*)

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.18) Kṛṣṇa confirms that He is the ultimate goal: "I am the goal, the sustainer, the master, the witness, the abode, the refuge, and the most dear friend." Attaining perfection in spiritual life requires that we recognize the ultimate goal and focus on achieving it with the precision with which Arjuna aimed his arrows. As Śrīla Prabhupāda describes in his purport to this verse, however, we must first recognize the proper goal. "*Gati* means the destination where we want to go. But the ultimate goal is Kṛṣṇa, although people do not know it. One who does not know Kṛṣṇa is misled, and his so-called progressive march is either partial or hallucinatory."

Without proper direction, people engage in so many meaningless and sinful activities, but scriptures and spiritual leaders have recommended that our real *svārtha-gati*, or goal of self-interest, is Kṛṣṇa. Just as young Arjuna correctly identified the bird's eye as his target and ignored everything else, we must know our ultimate goal and how to achieve it.

The Goal of Meditation, Knowledge, and Action

Bhagavad-gītā confirms that Kṛṣṇa is the goal of all spiritual processes, although they may be incomplete or indirect. His localized aspect of Paramātmā (Supersoul) is the aim of *dhyāna-yoga* (meditation); knowledge of His supremacy is the ultimate realization of *jñāna-yoga* (knowledge); and offering the fruits of one's labors is the ultimate purpose of *karma-yoga* (action in Kṛṣṇa consciousness). Yet, despite these different paths toward Him, true knowledge of Kṛṣṇa is extremely rare: "Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth." (Bg. 7.3)

The yogas of meditation, knowledge, and action reach their perfection in *bhakti-yoga*, or devotional service. Regarding spiritual knowledge, for example, Kṛṣṇa says, "One can understand Me as I am, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of Me by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God." (Bg. 18.54) Devotional service provides the only direct path to Kṛṣṇa, like an elevator that goes directly to the top floor of a building, bypassing all intermediate stops. *Bhakti* is the key to successful attainment of the ultimate goal. Kṛṣṇa calls it the "imperishable path" and those who follow it "very, very dear" to Him. (Bg. 12.20)

The Path for this Age

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa in the form of His devotee, recommends chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* as the only path of deliverance in Kali-yuga, the present fallen age of quarrel and hypocrisy. Kṛṣṇa's names are equal to Him. Therefore attentive chanting, with care to avoid *nāma-aparādha* (offenses of the holy names), is the key to removing material desires and, simultaneously, to cultivating spiritual ones. Regardless of external circumstances, anyone can chant, and chanting provides a sure path to achieving spiritual progress on the path toward the ultimate goal.

The devotional songs of the sixteenth-century devotee Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura emphasize exclusive devotion to Kṛṣṇa. He sings, "Chanting 'O Kṛṣṇa! O Kṛṣṇa!' I shall wander in ecstasy, thinking of nothing other than You. Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are my goal in life and death and the masters of my breath." In another song, he suggests that one's life is wasted by not taking advantage of the spiritual process Kṛṣṇa gives to return to Him. "O Lord Hari, Lord Hari, I have spent my life uselessly. Although I have obtained a human birth, I have refused to worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and in this way I have knowingly drunk poison."

Narottama cautions against wasting the precious human form of life by failing to pursue the ultimate goal. Out of 8,400,000 species of life, the human form alone provides the opportunity to make spiritual progress. As *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states, *jīvasya tattva-jijñāsā*: the aim of life is to inquire about the Absolute Truth, Kṛṣṇa. The result of inquiring about the Absolute Truth

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is to engage oneself in devotional service to the Lord. Regardless of how one temporarily earns his or her livelihood, the only true and eternal profession of a Kṛṣṇa conscious person is devotional service. This is, in fact, the constitutional position of all living entities.

In the same way that striking a match brings out its latent quality of fire, devotional service develops devotional qualities, which are necessary for pure love of God. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* lists twenty-six qualities of a devotee, and one of these is *sthira*, or being fixed in devotional service. This is another way to describe "one-pointed attention." Even in the face of extreme difficulty, a devotee fixed in devotional service cannot be shaken.

Like the Ganges Flowing to the Sea

The prayers of Queen Kunti, the mother of the five Pāṇḍavas, provide an excellent example of unalloyed devotion. She remembered how her family overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles again and again. With clarity she prays to Kṛṣṇa, and even asks to experience the calamites again so that she can constantly remember Him. Kṛṣṇa is the only refuge for His devotees. Queen Kunti ultimately asks that her mind be fixed exclusively on Him, just as the water of the Ganges flows toward the ocean without impediments.

True steadiness means that despite the external situation, the devotee does not waver in executing devotional service. *Bhagavad-gītā* presents the image of a candle in a windless place to illustrate the tranquility of an undisturbed, Kṛṣṇa conscious mind, and Kṛṣṇa considers one whose mind is fixed on His personal form to be "most perfect." (Bg. 12.2)

Kṛṣṇa is known as Adhokṣaja, "the Supreme Transcendence," and so He cannot be reached, or even understood, by mundane senses. Kṛṣṇa cannot be seen by even the most advanced technological attempt. But when one is qualified, He will reveal Himself. The practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—such as hearing, chanting, and remembering—help spiritualize the senses and train the mind to stay fixed on Kṛṣṇa. Devotees who fix their mind solely on Kṛṣṇa attract His attention and "live in Me always, without a doubt." (Bg. 12.8)

The Role of the Guru

One can achieve this perfect focus only by the mercy of the spiritual master, who gives spiritual instructions to help the disciple progress on the path toward pure devotion. Firm faith in the spiritual master is essential to achieving the ultimate goal of Kṛṣṇa. By pleasing the spiritual master, the representative of Kṛṣṇa, one pleases Kṛṣṇa. As Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has taught in the *Gurvaṣṭakam*, "By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Kṛṣṇa. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement."

Pleasing the spiritual master is, therefore, essential to reach the ultimate goal. One who offends the spiritual master will lose his fixed course and become like a boat without a captain. The spiritual master is compared to the captain of the ship in which the disciple crosses the ocean of material suffering. Without a captain to navigate the ship on the proper path, one lacks direction and cannot stay fixed in devotional service and or reach the ultimate goal. By helping the disciple stay fixed on the path of devotional service, the spiritual master leads the disciple back home, back to Godhead.

Kṛṣṇa has given us free will, and He gives us the chance to return to our original constitutional position, free from illusion and misery. He resides in our heart and is waiting for us to turn to Him. Under the shelter of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, let us remember the precision of Arjuna's arrows and take advantage of the opportunity to aim our devotional efforts at the ultimate goal.

Mohinī Rādhā Devī Dāsī graduated from Columbia University with a degree in English literature. She is a disciple of His Holiness Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and wife of Nārada Ṛṣi Dāsa. She lives with her husband at Hare Krishna Land, Mumbai, India, where they serve in the temple and she teaches at the Bhaktivedanta Mission School.

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HOW I CAME TO KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

My Journey to Theism

"Though I was an atheist, God always attracted me, and He was a real mystery to me."

by Kishore Kumar Sarder

WHEN I WAS A fourteen-year-old schoolboy, I met a communist who gave me some books to read. Reading was my favorite hobby, and I had great interest in reading different types of books. So I started to read the communist books. I was at the age when many boys and girls want to revolt against traditions and norms, and I was no exception. Rather, I was more revolutionary than my classmates, and the communist books only made things worse.

The books said that capitalists deceive people in the name of God and religion. The books explained how our solar system was created and how our blue planet Earth and other planets were created from the sun some billions of years ago. I had learned before that God created everything, but I did not know the details of how He did it. That is why when I read that the Earth was created because of the great attraction between the sun and another star, I promptly accepted this phenomena without question. My mind was ready to grasp these fantastic ideas that are against tradition. As a result, I became an atheist in my youth and continued to be one for about thirty years, until I was forty-four.

When I went to college I never stopped reading books. I always wanted to learn more. When I was eighteen years old and a student at college, suddenly I decided to discover God. Though I was an atheist, God always attracted me, and He was a real mystery to me. I left home with the hope that I would join some religious mission and become a monk. Then, by meditation, I would devote myself to knowing and discovering God.

I went to India and joined a Rama Krishna Mission group to become a perfect monk. The Mission had very hard and fast rules. Everyone had to get up very early in the morning to meditate and perform other regular activities. But I was not used to getting up early, and I was addicted to smoking, which was strictly prohibited in the Mission house. After three months, I left the group and returned home, not knowing God at all. My own mission had failed. But at my age, the attempt was a thrill nonetheless.

Later, I went back to study in the university. All my effort went into gaining more and more knowledge so that I could disprove God in any debate or argument. I ignored people who were religious and believed in God. Gradually, theistic people seemed to be great stupid fools to me. Sometimes I would think, “How can a person be so blind as to believe in God?” Theism seemed extreme superstition. The Big Bang theory, Darwin’s evolution theory, as well as fantasy books on UFOs and extraterrestrial beings, made me more and more atheistic.

All my effort went into gaining more and more knowledge so that I could disprove God in any debate or argument.

My Father’s Disturbing Chanting

I was born and brought up in an environment where my father was a lifelong Vaiṣṇava and a vegetarian. When I would see him not eating any fish or flesh, I would consider him stupid because it was beyond my imagination that a person could avoid eating delicious fish and flesh and eat only vegetables. He would get up from bed very early, at 4:00 A.M., and alone would sing the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* with some musical instruments. That greatly disturbed me because I could not sleep comfortably. But I could never stop him.

Days, months, and years passed. Gradually I could feel one thing inside me: As much as I was trying to know more and more to disprove God, I would see that there are some problems and fundamental limitations the scientists can never resolve. For instance, scientists say that the universe was created from a Big Bang. They have tried to describe all the states of the universe just after the Big Bang and up till the present time. They say space-time was created from the Big Bang and that it is still expanding today. They have tried to show how the many kinds of particles and sub-particles were created at that very early stage of the universe and how this super-fine-tuned universe came to be what it is now. But surprisingly, no scientist can say why the Big Bang occurred and why it happened about fifteen billion years ago rather than earlier or later. Finally, where did the singularity (the “thing” that exploded to become the Big Bang) get its mass of infinite density?

Scientists cannot answer these fundamental questions. Rather they can only suggest possibilities and promote their own opinions. I started to doubt their theories because it seemed scientists themselves believe in something they do not know at all. In the name of science they promote their beliefs, and that is wrong.

So my question was, If both theists and scientists believe in something they do not really know, what is the difference between them? That made me think again about God. I became busy trying to know God by way of scientific exploration. In 1992 I read Stephen Hawking’s best-selling book, *A Brief History of Time.* In 1980, when he wrote the book, he said that the Grand Unified Theory might be discovered within twenty years. Twenty-eight years have passed, but physicists are still stumped. The Grand Unified Theory is an effort to explain the world with one almighty theory, most likely with God absent. In a narrow sense, GUT is the effort to find the one and only particle from which all other particles have been built up and to unravel the mystery of the universe. But theoretically, discovering GUT is impossible, because it is impossible to create any infinite temperature in a laboratory or elsewhere by which a mini Big Bang can be created artificially. That’s required to get all the information about what happened during the supposed original Big Bang.

I would always remain busy with this kind of thinking. Because of being an atheist, I was not really happy. Feeling empty inside, I thought that life had no meaning or greater purpose. But I was not ready to think of myself as an animal, as per Darwinism. I identified with my situation in the world and held a respectable position in the work force.

Making the Connections

One day while I was going to the office on my motorbike, I was thinking of God and was trying to connect God, His creation, scientific explorations, and theories of the origin of the universe. Suddenly there was a storm inside my brain. I thought about how the universe is fine tuned, with proper balance on a large scale, but according to the second law of thermodynamics, the universe should not be fine tuned and balanced. It should come to a disorderly state over time. To justify this discrepancy, scientists imagine a kind of dark matter spread throughout the universe, creating balance. Scientists say that only ten percent of the mass of the universe is visible; the remaining ninety percent is invisible dark matter.

I recalled that the word *Kṛṣṇa* means both “dark” and “attraction.” I thought that maybe Kṛṣṇa was the solution to this great fundamental problem.

I turned my motorbike around. Instead of going to the office, I went

(*please turn to page 58*)

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•◆ **Mumbai (Bombay), Maharashtra —** Hare Krishna Land, Juhu 400 049/ Tel. (022) 26206860/ Fax: (022) 26205214/ info@iskconmumbai.com; guest.house.bombay@pamho.net
•◆ **Mumbai, Maharashtra —** 7 K. M. Munshi Marg, Chowpatty 400 007/ Tel. (022) 23665500/ Fax: (022) 23665555/ info@radhagopinath.com
Mumbai, Maharashtra — Shristhi Complex, Mira Rd. (E), opposite Royal College, Dist. Thane, 401 107/ Tel. (022) 2811-7795 or -7796/ Fax: (022) 2811-8875/ jagjivan.gkg@pamho.net
Mysore, Karnataka — #31, 18th Cross, Jayanagar, 570 014/ Tel. (0821) 2500582 or 6567333/ mysore.iskcon@gmail.com
Nagpur, Maharashtra — Bharatwada Rd., Near Golmohar Nagar, Ramanuja Nagar, Kalamana Market, Nagpur 440 008/ Tel. 0937015638, 9371064102, or 9423635311/ iskcon.nagpur@pamho.net
Nellore, AP — ISKCON City, Hare Krishna Rd., 524 004/ Tel. (0861) 2314577 or 09215536589/ sukadevaswami@gmail.com
•◆ **New Delhi, UP —** Hare Krishna Hill, Sant Nagar Main Road, East of Kailash, 110 065/ Tel. (011) 2623-5133, 4, 5, 6, or 7/ Fax: (011) 2621-5421/ delhi@pamho.net; (Guesthouse: neel.sunder@pamho.net)
• **New Delhi, UP —** 41/77, Punjabi Bagh (West), 110 026/ Tel. (011) 25222851 or 25227478
Noida, UP — A-5, Sector-33, Noida 201 301/ Tel. (0120) 2506211 or 2506262
Pandharpur, Maharashtra — Hare Krishna Dhama, East Bank of Chandrabhaga River, Pandharpur, Dist. Solapur, 413 304/ Tel. (02186) 267242 or 267266, or 9423335991/ iskcon.pandharpur@pamho.net
Patna, Bihar — Arya Kumar Rd., Rajendra Nagar, 800 016/ Tel. (0612) 687637 or 685081/ Fax: (0612) 687635/ krishna.kripa.jps@pamho.net
Pune, Maharashtra — 4 Tarapoor Rd., Camp, 411 001/ Tel. (020) 41033222 or 41033223/ iyfpune@vsnl.com
Puri, Orissa — Bhakti Kuti, Swargadwar, 752 001/ Tel. (06752) 231440
Raipur, Chhatisgarh — Hare Krishna Land, Alopi Nagar, Opposite Maharshi Vidyalaya, Tatibandh, Raipur 492 001/ Tel. (0771) 5037555 or 9893276985/ iskconraipur@yahoo.com
Rajkot, Gujarat — Sri Sri Radha Neelmadhav Dham, Kalawad Rd., Opposite Kankot Patiya, Mota Mava, 360 005/ Tel. 9898550185/ vaishnavseva@yahoo.co.in
Ranaghat, WB — Gourdham, Habibpur, Ranaghat, Dist. Nadia, 741 403/ Tel. (03473) 281150 or 281226/ shyamrup.jps@pamho.net
Salem, TN — ISKCON, Hare Krishna Land, Karuppur 636 012/ Tel. (0427) 2001686/ iskcon.salem@pamho.net
Secunderabad, AP — 27 St. John's Rd., 500 026/ Tel. (040) 780-5232/ Fax: (040) 814021
Silchar, Assam — Ambikapatti, Silchar, Dist. Cachar, 788 004/ Tel. (03842) 34615
Siliguri, WB — ISKCON Road, Gitalpara, 734 406/ Tel. (0353) 426619, 539046, or 539082/ Fax: (0353) 526130
Solapur, Maharashtra — Amruta Apartment, Old Akalkot Nagar, Dist. Solapur, 413 005/ Tel. 9371178393
Sri Rangam, TN — 103 Amma Mandapam Rd., Sri Rangam, Trichy 620 006/ Tel. (0431) 2433945/ iskcon_srirangam@yahoo.com.in
Surat, Gujarat — Ashram Rd., Jahangirpura, 395 005/ Tel. (0261) 2765891 or 2765516/ surat@pamho.net
• **Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), Kerala —** Hospital Rd., Thycaud, 695 014/ Tel. (0471) 2328197/ jsdasa@yahoo.co.in
◆ **Tirupati, AP —** K.T. Rd., Vinayaka Nagar, 517 507/ Tel. (0877) 2230114 or 2230009/ revati.raman.jps@pamho.net (Guesthouse: iskcon_ashram@yahoo.co.in)
Udhampur, J&K — Srila Prabhupada Ashram, Srila Prabhupada Marg, Srila Prabhupada Nagar 182 101/ Tel. (01992) 270298/ info@iskconudhampur.com
Ujjain, MP — Hare Krishna Land, Bharatpuri, 456 010/ Tel. (0734) 2521020, 2535000, or 2531000/ Fax: 0734-2536000/ iskcon.ujjain@pamho.net
Vallabh Vidyanagar, Gujarat — Opp. B&B Polytechnic, Mota Bazaar, Ananda, 388 120/ Tel. (02692) 230796 or 233012/ iskcon.vvnagar@pamho.net
Varanasi, UP — ISKCON, B 27/80 Durgakund Rd., Near Durgakund Police Station, Varanasi 221 010/ Tel. (0542) 246422 or 222617
Vellore, TN — Chennai Ext. Centre, 10–12, 10th East Cross Road, Gandhi Nagar, 632 006
Vijayawada, AP — Venkatapalem Karakatta Rd., Undavalli Village, Tadepalli Mandaal, Vijayawada, Guntur Dist. 522 501/ Tel. (08645) 272513/ mmdasiskconvijayawada@gmail.com
Visakhapatnam, AP — Hare Krishna Land, Sagaranagar 530 045 (mail: ISKCON, D. No. 7-5-108, Pandurangapuram Beach Rd., 530 003)/ Tel. (0891)2528376 or 6537625/ samba.jps@pamho.net
◆ **Vrindavan, UP —** Krishna-Balaram Mandir, Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg, Raman Reti, Mathura Dist., 281 124/ Tel. & Fax: (0565) 2540728/ iskcon.vrindavan@pamho.net; (Guesthouse: Tel. (0565) 2540022; ramamani@sancharnet.in)
Warangal, AP — Mulugu Rd., Ayappa Pidipally, 506 007/ Tel. (08712) 426182
Yamunanagar, Haryana — ISKCON Hare Krishna Dham, Hare Krishna Marg, Raghunathpuri, Yamunanagar 135 001/ Tel. (01732) 321001 or (mobile) 09355330775/ vishu_bakshi05@yahoo.co.in

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Ahmedabad District, Gujarat (Hare Krishna Farm) — Katwada (contact ISKCON Ahmedabad)
Assam — Karnamadhu, Dist. Karimganj
Chamorshi, Maharashtra — 78 Krishnanagar Dham, Dist. Gadhachiroli, 442 603/ Tel. (0218) 623473

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Note for international phone calls: When dialing from outside the country, drop the "0" that begins most city codes (the numbers shown in parentheses). **Exception:** For Russia, drop the initial "8." Telephone numbers include country codes, identified by a +. To save space, we've skipped the codes for North America (1) and India (91). ◆ Temples with restaurants or dining

Centers Around the World

Hyderabad, AP (New Naimisaranya Farm) — P. O. Dabilpur Village, Medchal Tq., R.R. Dist., 501 401/ Tel. (040) 65520070 or 9440057263/ naimisaranya@pamho.net
Indore, MP (Krishna-Balarama Mandir) — Hare Krishna Vihar, Nipania Village/ Tel. (0731) 572794
Karnataka (Bhaktivedanta Eco-Village) — Nagodi P.O., Vollur Valley, Hosanagar Taluq, Shivmoga District, 577 425 (mail: Garuda Guha, Kollur, D.K. District, 576 220)
Mayapur, WB — (contact ISKCON Mayapur)
Puri, Orissa — ISKCON, Bhaktivedanta Ashram, Sipasirubuli, 752 001/ Tel. (06752) 230494
Surat, Gujarat — Bhaktivedanta Rajavidyalaya, Krishnalok, Surat-Bardoli Rd. Gangapur, P. O. Gangadhara, Dist. Surat, 394 310/ Tel. (02622) 63546
Vrindavan, UP — Vrinda Kund, Nandagaon, Dist. Mathura, U.P.

ADDITIONAL RESTAURANTS

Kolkata, WB — Govinda’s, ISKCON House, 22 Gurusaday Rd., 700 019/ Tel. (033) 24756922 or 24749009
Surat, Gujarat — Ashram Road, Jahangirpura 395005/ Tel. (0261) 2765891 or 2765516/ surat@pamho.net

CANADA

Calgary, Alberta — 313 Fourth St. N.E., T2E 3S3/ Tel. (403) 265-3302/ Fax: (403) 547-0795/ vamanstones@shaw.ca
Edmonton, Alberta — 9353 35th Ave. NW, T6E 5R5/ Tel. (780) 439-9999/ edmonton@harekrishnatemple.com
Montreal, Quebec — 1626 Pie IX Boulevard, H1V 2C5/ Tel. & fax: (514) 521-1301/ iskconmontreal@bellnet.ca
◆ **Ottawa, Ontario —** 212 Somerset St. E., K1N 6V4/ Tel. (613) 565-6544/ Fax: (613) 565-2575/ iskconottawa@sympatico.ca
Regina, Saskatchewan — 1279 Retallack St., S4T 2H8/ Tel. (306) 525-1640
Toronto, Ontario — 243 Avenue Rd., M5R 2J6/ Tel. (416) 922-5415/ Fax: (416) 922-1021/ toronto@pamho.net
Vancouver, B.C. — 5462 S.E. Marine Dr., Burnaby V5J 3G8/ Tel. (604) 433-9728/ Fax: (604) 648-8715; Govinda’s Bookstore & Cafe: (604) 433-7100 or (888) 433-8722/ akrura@krishna.com

RURAL COMMUNITY

Ashcroft, B.C. — Saranagati Dhama (mail: P.O. Box 99, V0K 1A0)/ Tel. (250) 457-7438/ iskconsaranagati@hotmail.com

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◆ **Atlanta, Georgia —** 1287 South Ponce de Leon Ave., N.E., 30306/ Tel. & fax: (404) 377-8680/ info@atlantaharekrishnas.com
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Berkeley, California — 2334 Stuart Street, 94705/ Tel. (510) 649-8619/ Fax: (510) 665-9366
Boise, Idaho — 1615 Martha St., 83706/ Tel. (208) 344-4274/ boise_temple@yahoo.com
Boston, Massachusetts — 72 Commonwealth Ave., 02116/ Tel. (617) 247-8611/ acyutadasa.nrs@gmail.com
Chicago, Illinois — 1716 W. Lunt Ave., 60626/ Tel. (773) 973-0900/ Fax: (773) 973-0526/ chicagoiskcon@yahoo.com
Columbus, Ohio — 379 W. Eighth Ave., 43201/ Tel. (614) 421-1661/ Fax: (614) 294-0545/ rmanjari@sbcglobal.net
◆ **Dallas, Texas —** 5430 Gurley Ave., 75223/ Tel. (214) 827-6330/ Fax: (214) 823-7264/ txkrishnas@aol.com; restaurant: vegetariantaste@aol.com
◆ **Denver, Colorado —** 1400 Cherry St., 80220/ Tel. (303) 333-5461/ Fax: (303) 321-9052/ info@krishnadenver.com
Detroit, Michigan — 383 Lenox Ave., 48215/ Tel. (313) 824-6000/ gaurangi108@hotmail.com
Gainesville, Florida — 214 N.W. 14th St., 32603/ Tel. (352) 336-4183/ Fax: (352) 379-2927/ kalakantha.acbsp@pamho.net
Hartford, Connecticut — 1683 Main St., E. Hartford, 06108/ Tel. & fax: (860) 289-7252/ pyari@sbcglobal.net
◆ **Honolulu, Hawaii —** 51 Coelho Way, 96817/ Tel. (808) 595-4913/ tejaprakash@gmail.com
Houston, Texas — 1320 W. 34th St., 77018/ Tel. (713) 686-4482/ Fax: (713) 956-9968/ management@iskconhouston.org
Kansas City, Missouri — Rupanuga Vedic College (Men’s Seminary), 5201 The Paseo, 64110/ Tel. (800) 340-5286 or (816) 924-5619/ Fax: (816) 361-0509/ info@rvc.edu
Laguna Beach, California — 285 Legion St., 92651/ Tel. (949) 494-7029/ info@lagunatemple.com
Las Vegas, Nevada — Govinda’s Center of Vedic India, 6380 S. Eastern Ave., Suite 8, 89120/ Tel. (702) 434-8332/ info@govindascenter.com
◆ **Los Angeles, California —** 3764 Watseka Ave., 90034/ Tel. (310) 836-2676/ Fax: (310) 839-2715/ shastra.krit@pamho.net
◆ **Miami, Florida —** 3220 Virginia St., 33133/ Tel. (305) 442-7218/ Fax: (305) 444-7145/ devotionalservice@iskcon-miami.org
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New York, New York — 26 Second Avenue, 10003/ Tel. (212) 253-6182/ krishnanyc@gmail.com
Orlando, Florida — 2651 Rouse Rd., 32817/ Tel. (407) 257-3865 or 547-1430
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — 41 West Allens Lane, 19119/ Tel. (215) 247-4600/ Fax: (215) 247-8702/ iskconphilly@aol.com
◆ **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania —** 1408 South St., 19146/ Tel. (215) 985-9303/ savecows@aol.com
Phoenix, Arizona — 100 S. Weber Dr., Chandler, 85226/ Tel. (480) 705-4900/ Fax: (480) 705-4901/ svgd108@yahoo.com
Portland, Oregon — 3766 SE Division, 97202/ Tel. (503) 236-6734; info@iskconportland.com
◆ **St. Louis, Missouri —** 3926 Lindell Blvd., 63108/ Tel. (314) 535-8085 or 534-1708/ Fax: (314) 535-0672/ iskcon.stl@pamho.net
◆ **San Diego, California —** 1030 Grand Ave., Pacific Beach, 92109/ Tel. (310) 895-0104/ Fax: (858) 483-0941/ krishna.sandiego@gmail.com
San Jose, California — 951 S. Bascom Ave., 95128/ Tel. (408) 293-4959/ iskconsanjose@yahoo.com
Seattle, Washington — 1420 228th Ave. S.E., Sammamish, 98075/ Tel. (425) 391-3293/ Fax: (425) 868-8928/ info@iskconseattle.com
◆ **Spanish Fork, Utah —** Krishna Temple Project & KHQN Radio, 8628 S. State Road, 84660/ Tel. (801) 798-3559/ Fax: (810) 798-9121/ carudas@earthlink.net
Tallahassee, Florida — 1323 Nylic St., 32304/ Tel. & fax: (850) 224-3803/ darudb@hotmail.com
Towaco, New Jersey — 100 Jacksonville Rd. (mail: P.O. Box 109), 07082/ Tel. & fax: (973) 299-0970/ newjersey@iskcon.net
◆ **Tucson, Arizona —** 711 E. Blacklidge Dr., 85719/ Tel. (520) 792-0630/ Fax: (520) 791-0906/ tucphx@cs.com
Washington, D.C. — 10310 Oaklyn Dr., Potomac, Maryland 20854/ Tel. (301) 299-2100/ Fax: (301) 299-5025/ ad@pamho.net

RURAL COMMUNITIES

◆ **Alachua, Florida (New Raman Reti) —** 17306 N.W. 112th Blvd., 32615 (mail: P.O. Box 819, 32616)/ Tel. (386) 462-2017/ Fax: (386) 462-2641/ office@newramanreti.com
Carriere, Mississippi (New Talavan) — 31492 Anner Road, 39426/ Tel. (601) 749-9460 or 799-1354/ Fax: (601) 799-2924/ talavan@hughes.net
Gurabo, Puerto Rico (New Govardhana Hill) — Carr. 181, Km. 16.3, Bo. Santa Rita, Gurabo (mail: HC-01, Box 8440, Gurabo, PR 00778)/ (Office) Tel. & fax: (787) 737-4265/ (Temple) Tel. (787)712-0358/ iskcon_pr@hotmail.com
Hillsborough, North Carolina (New Goloka) — 1032 Dimmocks Mill Rd., 27278/ Tel. (919) 732-6492/ bkgoswami@earthlink.net
◆ **Moundsville, West Virginia (New Vrindaban) —** R.D. No. 1, Box 319, Hare Krishna Ridge, 26041/ Tel. (304) 843-1600; Guest House, (304) 845-5905/ Fax: (304) 845-0023/ mail@newvrindaban.com
Mulberry, Tennessee (Murari-sevaka) — 532 Murari Lane, 37359 (mail: P.O. Box 108, Lynchburg, TN 37352)/ Tel. (931) 227-6156/ Tel. & fax: (931) 759-6888/ murari_sevaka@yahoo.com
Port Royal, Pennsylvania (Gita Nagari) — 534 Gita Nagari Rd., 17082/ Tel. (717) 527-4101/ kaulinidasi@hotmail.com

ADDITIONAL RESTAURANTS

Gurabo, Puerto Rico — Goura’s, Carr. 945, Km 2, H.8, Bo. Masas 1, sec. El Silencio, 00778/ Tel. (787) 737-0445 or 648-0472
Hato Rey, Puerto Rico — Tamal Krishna's Veggie Garden, 131 Eleanor Roosevelt, 00918/ Tel. (787) 754-6959/ Fax: (787) 756-7769/ tkveggiegarden@aol.com
Seattle, Washington — My Sweet Lord, 5521 University Way, 98105/ Tel. (425) 643-4664

UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND

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Birmingham, England — 84 Stanmore Rd., Edgbaston B16 9TB/ Tel. +44 (0121) 420 4999/ birmingham@iskcon.org.uk
Cardif, Wales — The Soul Centre, 116 Cowbridge Rd., Canton/ Tel. +44 (02920) 390391/ the.soul.centre@pamho.net
Coventry, England — Kingfield Rd., Coventry (mail: 19 Gloucester St., Coventry CV1 3BZ)/ Tel. +44 (024) 7655 2822 or 5420/ haridas.kds@pamho.net
Leicester, England — 21 Thoresby St., North Evington, LE5 4GU/ Tel. +44 (0116) 276 2587/ pradyumna.jas@pamho.net
Lesmahagow, Scotland — Karuna Bhavan, Bankhouse Rd., Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire, ML11 0ES/ Tel. +44 (01555) 894790/ Fax: +44 (01555) 894526/ karunabhavan@aol.com
◆ **London, England (city) —** 10 Soho St., W1D 3DL/ Tel. +44 (020) 7437-3662; residential /pujaris, 7439-3606; shop, 7287-0269; Govinda’s Restaurant, 7437-4928/ Fax: +44 (020) 7439-1127/ london@pamho.net
◆ **London, England (country) —** Bhaktivedanta Manor, Dharam Marg, Hilfield Lane, Watford, Herts, WD25 8EZ/ Tel. +44 (01923) 851000/ Fax: +44 (01923) 851006/ bhaktivedanta.manor@pamho.net; (for accommodations:) bmguesthouse@gmail.com
London, England (south) — 42 Enmore Road, South Norwood, SE25 5NG/ Tel. +44 (020) 8656 4296/ eternal_duty@hotmail.co.uk
London, England (Kings Cross) — 102 Caledonain Rd., Kings Cross, Islington, N1 9DN/ Tel. +44 (020) 7168 5732/ foodforalluk@aol.com
Manchester, England — 20 Mayfield Rd., Whalley Range, M16 8FT/ Tel. +44 (0161) 226-4416
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England — 304 Westgate Rd., NE4 6AR/ Tel. +44 (0191) 272 1911/ newcastle@iskcon.org.uk
◆ **Swansea, Wales —** 8 Craddock St., SA1 3EN/ Tel. +44 (01792) 468469/ iskcon.swansea@pamho.net; restaurant: govin–das@hotmail.com

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Upper Lough Erne, Northern Ireland — Govindadwipa Dhama, Inisrath Island, Derrylin, Co. Fermanagh, BT92 9GN/ Tel. +44 (028) 6772 1512/ govindadwipa@pamho.net

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Dublin, Ireland — Govinda’s, 4 Aungier St., Dublin 2/ Tel. +353 (01) 475 0309/ Fax: (01) 478 6204/ info@govindas.ie
Dublin, Ireland — Govinda’s, 83 Middle Abbey St., Dublin 1/ Tel. +353 (01) 661 5095/ info@govindas.ie
Dublin, Ireland — Govinda's, 18 Merrion Row, Dublin 2/ Tel. +353 (01) 661 5095/ praghosa.sdg@pamho.net

AUSTRALASIA

AUSTRALIA

Adelaide — 25 Le Hunte St. (mail: P.O. Box 114, Kilburn, SA 5084)/ Tel. & fax: +61 (08) 8359-5120/ iskconsa@tpg.com.au
Brisbane — 95 Bank Rd., Graceville (mail: P.O. Box 83, Indooroopilly), QLD 4068/ Tel. +61 (07) 3379-5455/ Fax: +61 (07) 3379-5880/ brisbane@iskcon.org.au

Centers Around the World

Canberra — 44 Limestone Ave., Ainslie, ACT 2602 (mail: P.O. Box 1411, Canberra, ACT 2601)/ Tel. & fax: +61 (02) 6262-6208/ iskcon@harekrishnacanberra.com
Melbourne — 197 Danks St. (mail: P.O. Box 125), Albert Park , VIC 3206/ Tel. +61 (03) 9699-5122/ Fax: +61 (03) 9690-4093/ melbourne@pamho.net
Newcastle — 28 Bull St., Mayfield, NSW 2304/ Tel. +61 (02) 4967-7000/ iskcon_newcastle@yahoo.com.au
Perth — 144 Railway Parade (corner of The Strand) [mail: P.O. Box 102], Bayswater, WA 6053/ Tel. +61 (08) 9370-1552/ Fax: +61 (08) 9272-6636/ perth@pamho.net
Sydney — 180 Falcon St., North Sydney, NSW 2060 (mail: P.O. Box 459, Cammeray, NSW 2062)/Tel. +61 (02) 9959-4558/ Fax: +61 (02) 9957-1893/ info@iskcon.com.au
Sydney — Govinda's Yoga and Meditation Centre, 112 Darlinghurst Rd., Darlinghurst NSW 2010 (mail: P.O. Box 174, Kings Cross 1340)/ Tel. +61 (02) 9380-5162/ Fax: +61 (02) 9360-1736/ sita@govindas.com.au

RURAL COMMUNITIES

Bambra, VIC (New Nandagram) — 50 Seaches Outlet, off 1265 Winchelsea Deans Marsh Rd., Bambra VIC 3241/ Tel. +61 (03) 5288-7383
Cessnock, NSW (New Gokula) — Lewis Lane (off Mount View Rd., Millfield, near Cessnock [mail: P.O. Box 399, Cessnock, NSW 2325])/ Tel. +61 (02) 4998-1800/ Fax: +61 (02) 9957-1893/ iskconfarm@mac.com
Murwillumbah, NSW (New Govardhana) — Tyalgum Rd., Eungella (mail: P.O. Box 687), NSW 2484/ Tel. +61 (02) 6672-6579/ Fax: +61 (02) 6672-5498/ ajita@in.com.au

RESTAURANTS

Brisbane — Govinda's, 99 Elizabeth St., 1st floor, QLD 4000/ Tel. +61 (07) 3210-0255
Brisbane — Krishna's Cafe, 1st Floor, 82 Vulture St., West End, QLD 4000/ brisbane@pamho.net
Cairns — Gaura Nitai's, 55 Spence St., Cairns, QLD/ Tel. +61 (07) 4031-2255 or (0425) 725 901/ Fax: +61 (07) 4031 2256

NEW ZEALAND AND FIJI

Christchurch, NZ — 83 Bealey Ave. (mail: P.O. Box 25-190)/ Tel. +64 (03) 366-5174/ Fax: +64 (03) 366-1965/ iskconchch@clear.net.nz
Hamilton, NZ — 188 Maui St., RD 8, Te Rapa/ Tel. +64 (07) 850-5108/ rmaster@wave.co.nz
Labasa, Fiji — Delailabasa (mail: P.O. Box 133)/ Tel. +679 812912
Lautoka, Fiji — 5 Tavewa Ave. (mail: P.O. Box 125)/ Tel. +679 6664112/ regprakash@excite.com
Maroochydore — Govinda's Vegetarian Cafe, 2/7 First Avenue, QLD 4558/ Tel. +61 (07) 5451-0299
Melbourne — Crossways, 1st Floor, 123 Swanston St., VIC 3000/ Tel. +61 (03) 9650-2939
Melbourne — Gopal's, 139 Swanston St., VIC 3000/ Tel. +61 (03) 9650-1578
Nausori, Fiji — Hare Krishna Cultural Centre, 2nd Floor, Shop & Save Building, 11 Gulam Nadi St., Nausori Town (mail: P.O. Box 2183, Govt. Bldgs., Suva)/ Tel. +679 9969748 or 3475097/ Fax : +679 3477436/ vdas@frca.org.fj
Rakiraki, Fiji — Rewasa (mail: P.O. Box 204)/ Tel. +679 694243
Suva, Fiji — 166 Brewster St. (mail: P.O. Box 4299, Samabula)/ Tel. +679 3318441/ Fax: +679 3319097/ iskconsuva@connect.com.fj
Wellington, NZ — 105 Newlands Rd., Newlands/ Tel. +64 (04) 478-4108/ iskcon.wellington@paradise.net.nz
Wellington, NZ — Gaura Yoga Centre, 1st Floor, 175 Vivian St. (mail: P.O. Box 6271, Marion Square)/Tel. +64 (04) 801-5500

RURAL COMMUNITY

Auckland, NZ (New Varshan) — Hwy. 28, Riverhead, next to Huapai Golf Course (mail: R.D. 2, Kumeu)/ Tel. +64 (09) 412-8075/ Fax: +64 (09) 412-7130

EUROPE (partial list)*

Amsterdam — Van Hilligaertstraat 17, 1072 JX/ Tel. +31 (020) 675-1404 or -1694/ Fax: +31 (020) 675-1405/ amsterdam@pamho.net
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MY JOURNEY TO THEISM

(*continued from page 54*)

to the local ISKCON temple and bought a *Bhagavad-gītā* and a full set of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* I went home and started to read the *Gītā* first, without any delay. Like a person dying of thirst, I drank in the words. Here are some of the verses that especially struck me:

"O conqueror of wealth, there is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread." (7.7)

"At the beginning of Brahmā's day, all things become manifest from the unmanifest state, and thereafter, when the night falls, they are merged into the unmanifest again." (8.18)

"O son of Kuntī, at the end of the millennium all material manifestations enter into My nature, and at the beginning of another millennium, by My potency, I create them again." (9.7)

"The whole cosmic order is under Me. Under My will it is automatically manifested again and again, and under My will it is annihilated at the end." (9.8)

"This material nature, which is one of My energies, is working under My direction, O son of Kuntī, producing all moving and nonmoving beings. Under its rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again." (9.10)

"The total material substance, called Brahman, is the source of birth, and it is that Brahman that I impregnate, making possible the births of all living beings, O son of Bharata." (14.3)

I was greatly surprised. Instantly I realized that this is the real theory of the creation of the universe. Scientists have been looking for it a long time, but in the wrong way—like going to Japan when you're looking for America.

I realized that "become manifest" (8.18) refers to the creation of the universe and its four dimensions (the fourth being time). The unmanifest state is the virtual world of more than four dimensions. Scientists theorize a virtual world of as many as eleven dimensions, and they say that our universe will be destroyed one day and then created again. According to the String Theory and other theories, this process repeats continually. The following verse states the same idea: "Again and again when Brahmā's day arrives all things come into being, and with the arrival of his night they are helplessly annihilated." (8.19)

Without any more delay, I turned away from atheism and became a theist, having wasted thirty valuable years of my life. But I feel lucky, and I'm happy to think that Lord Kṛṣṇa has showered His mercy on me. Now, following the example of Arjuna, I have wholeheartedly taken shelter under Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy feet. As He instructs us, "Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee, offer obeisances to Me, and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me." (9.34)

Kishore Kumar Sarder is a deputy director for the Red Cross Society in Bangladesh.

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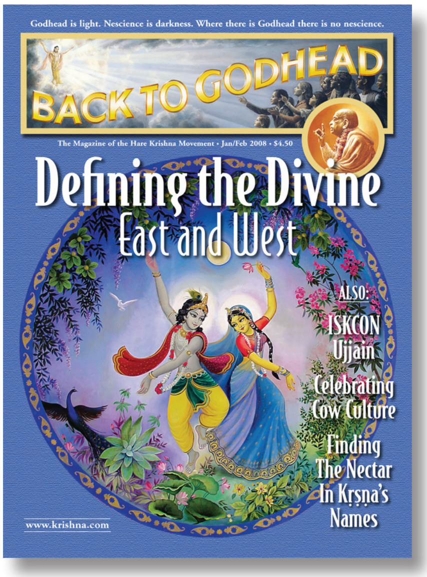
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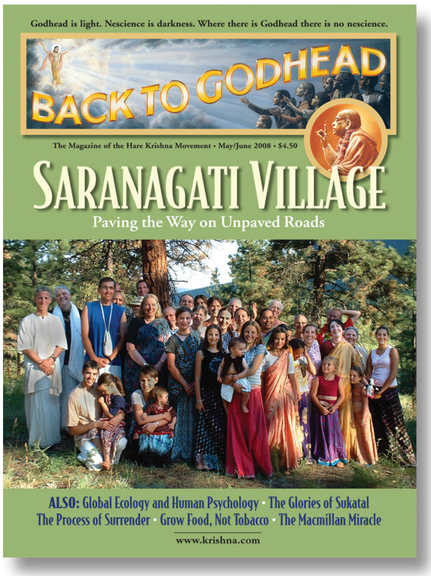
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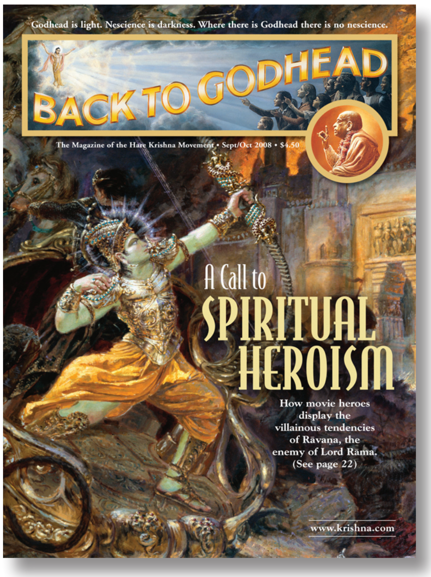
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Finding a Guru

THE LIVE HELP VOLUNTEERS on Krishna.com are often asked, "How do I find a guru in ISKCON?" It's not an easy question to answer.

But it is a good question. Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly stresses the need for a spiritual master. In one sense, Prabhupāda is the de facto spiritual master of anyone who follows his teachings. Still, our tradition insists that anyone serious about spiritual progress must approach a qualified guru and request initiation. If the guru agrees, a sort of contract is established between the two: The disciple agrees to follow the instructions of the guru, and the guru agrees to guide the disciple toward the goal of pure love of God.

By *contract* I don't mean to imply that the guru-disciple relationship is an impersonal business exchange. It is a spiritual relationship of love, trust, and respect. The guru is not merely fulfilling a ritual role but is the dearest friend of the disciple, being the direct representative of Kṛṣṇa.

As for finding a guru, first let me clear up a misconception. Many people think that finding a guru in ISKCON means picking from a list. While it's true that ISKCON's governing body (GBC) keeps a list of devotees authorized to accept disciples, the list is not closed. All devotees in ISKCON are potential spiritual masters, provided they meet the spiritual requirements. (Following etiquette, disciples generally refrain from initiating while their spiritual master is present in this world.)

An aspiring disciple should have a real relationship with the prospective guru. As with any relationship, it has to develop in some way. The prospective guru should be regularly guiding the prospective disciple. When both are satisfied that a true guru-disciple relationship exists, then initiation is appropriate.

All of this implies that if I'm looking for a guru, I must put myself in regular contact with someone more advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness than I am. In fact, it is sometimes said that we don't find the guru; the guru finds us. Or, more accurately, when we're ready to meet a guru, Kṛṣṇa sends one.

Naturally, meeting one's guru is easiest if one lives in the company of devotees, especially in or near an ISKCON community. Many devotees have changed their lives and moved close to a temple, understanding the importance of Kṛṣṇa conscious association. A person serious about spiritual progress has to consider that option. If it's not viable, then one must look for other ways to associate with devotees, such as scheduling regular trips to the nearest temple or inviting traveling preachers to one's home. In places with no ISKCON temple, groups of devotees sometimes meet regularly and sponsor visits from senior devotees. Once a connection is established, relationships can develop through correspondence.

Finding an ISKCON guru without direct association with ISKCON devotees will be difficult—but not impossible. More and more senior devotees are writing books, and recorded lectures are available to those willing to put some effort into finding them. If you feel inspired by a devotee's books or lectures, you can ask that person for personal spiritual guidance and see how the relationship develops.

To use a word that may be overused, *sincerity* is the key. If you sincerely want a guru, Kṛṣṇa will help. You just have to be willing to follow His direction from within your heart. —*Nāgarāja Dāsa*

Śrīla Prabhupāda

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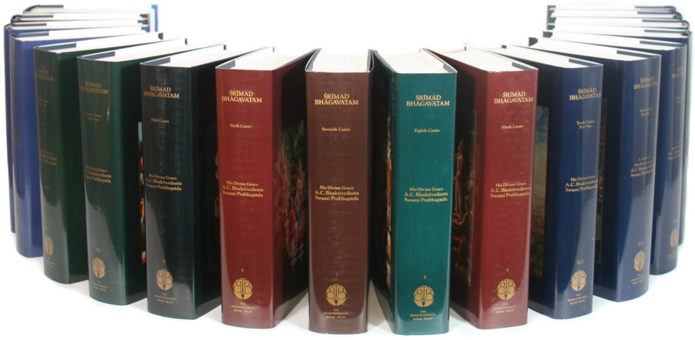

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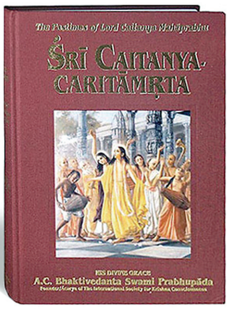

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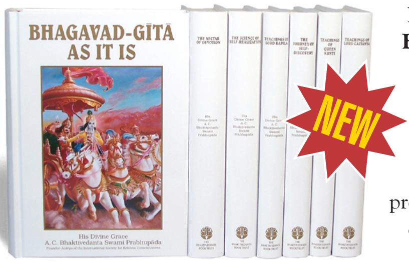

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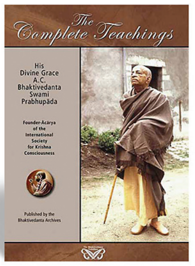

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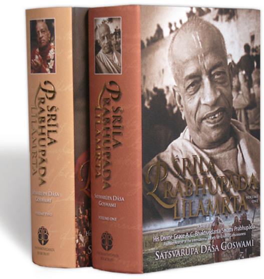

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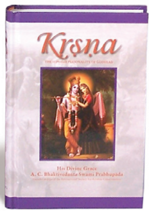

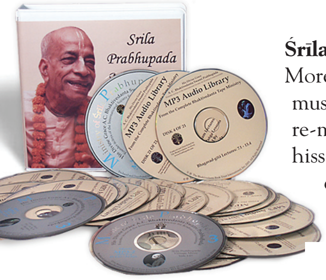

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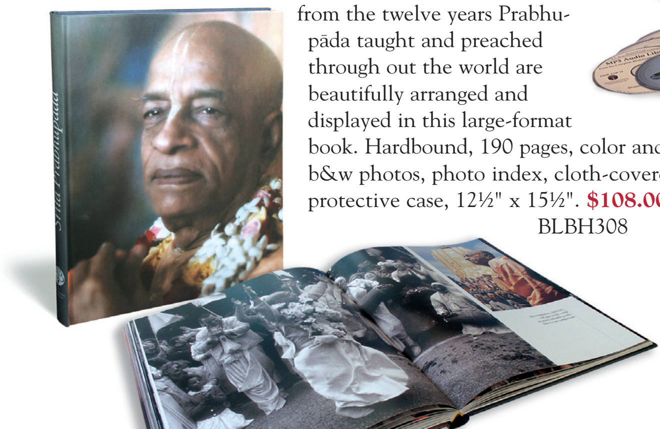

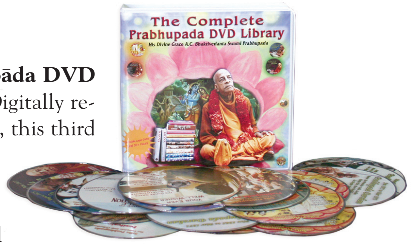

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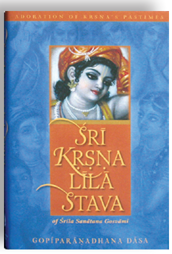

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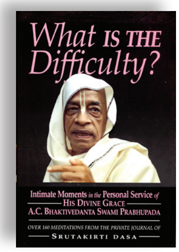

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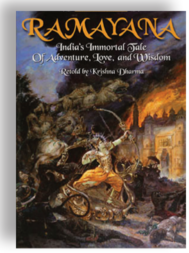

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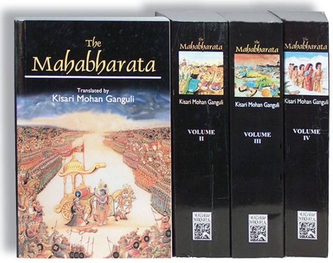

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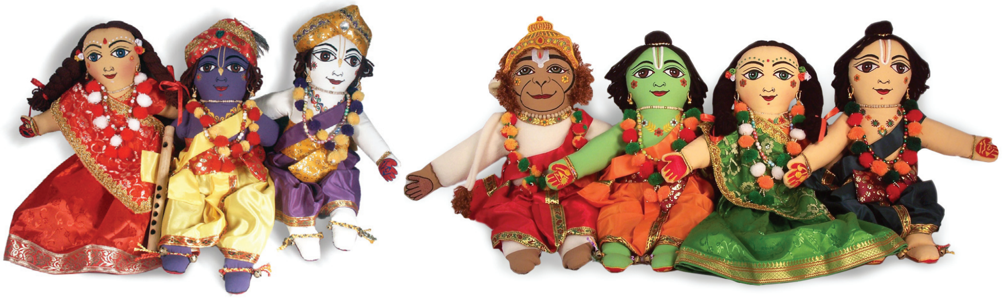

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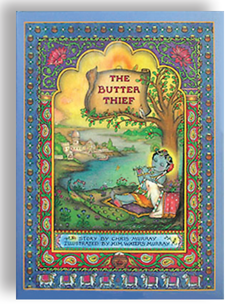

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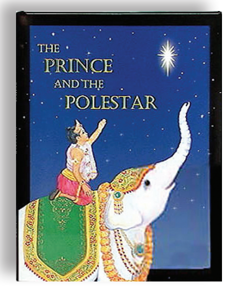

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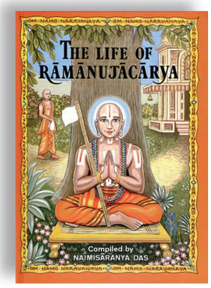

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VEDIC THOUGHTS

There is no scarcity for maintenance in the material world. Because of their poor fund of knowledge, the materialists are disturbed when there is an apparent increase of population on the earth. Whenever there is a living being on the earth, however, his subsistence is immediately arranged by the Lord. . . . If there is any scarcity in the world, it is the scarcity of God consciousness; otherwise, by the grace of the Lord, there is no scarcity of anything.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.5.5, Purport

For want of a taste of things spiritual, a grave doubt arises in the minds of those who are chained by worldly knowledge.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā 5.24, Commentary

By surrendering to Him [the Lord] one can escape the embrace of illusion, just as a dreaming person forgets his own body. One who wants liberation from fear should constantly meditate upon Him, Lord Hari, who is always on the platform of perfection and thus never subject to material birth.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.87.50

When a diseased eye is treated with medicinal ointment it gradually recovers its power to see. Similarly, as a conscious living entity cleanses himself of material contamination by hearing and chanting the pious narrations of My glories, he regains his ability to see Me, the Absolute Truth, in My subtle spiritual form.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.14.26

The forgetful conditioned soul is educated by Kṛṣṇa through the Vedic literatures, the realized spiritual master and the Supersoul. Through these, he can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead as He is, and he can understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa is his eternal master and deliverer from the clutches of *māyā*. In this way one can acquire real knowledge of his conditioned life and can come to understand how to attain liberation.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 20.123

My dear Devī, although the *Vedas* recommend worship of demigods, the worship of Lord Viṣṇu is topmost. However, above the worship of Lord Viṣṇu is the rendering of service to Vaiṣṇavas, who are related to Lord Viṣṇu.

Lord Śiva to Goddess Durgā
Padma Purāṇa

If even for a moment remembrance of Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa] is missed, that is the greatest loss, that is the greatest illusion, and that is the greatest anomaly.

Viṣṇu Purāṇa

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